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A LONG VACATION

IN

THE ARGENTINE ALPS

OR

WHERE TO SETTLE IN THE RIVER PLATE STATES.

WITH MAP.

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ac

BY

H. C. ROSS JOHNSON, F.R.G.S.

LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET,
Publisher in Ordinary to Her Majesty.
1868.

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DEDICATION.

TO SEÑORS

DON SAMUEL MOLINA,

FORMERLY GOVERNOR OF THE PROVINCE OF CATAMARCA,

DON MORDECAI MOLINA,

HIS BROTHER, AND

DON ADOLFO E. CARANZA,

THEIR ASSOCIATE IN THEIR MANY ENTERPRISES FOR THE WELFARE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR BEAUTIFUL COUNTRY, THESE PENCILLINGS ARE DEDICATED,

IN AFFECTIONATE REMEMBRANCE OF THE PLEASANT WEEKS SPENT JOURNEYING IN THEIR SOCIETY,

BY THE

AUTHOR.

Temple, London,
Nov., 1867.

Á LOS SEÑORES

DON SAMUEL MOLINA,

ANTES GOBERNARDOR DE LA PROVINCIA DE CATAMARCA,

SU HERMANO

DON MORDECAI MOLINA,

Y

DON ADOLFO E. CARANZA,

SU ASOCIDO EN SUS MUCHOS EMPRESSAS POR EL BIEN ESTAR Y DESAROLLO DE SU HEROMOSA PAIS, ESTA PEQUENA RESENIA SE DEDICA,

EN RECUERDO AFFECTUOSO DE LAS SEMAÑAS AGRADABLES DURANTE EL VIAJE IN SU SOCIEDAD,

POR EL

AUTOR.

Temple, Londres,
Nov., 1867.

PREFACE.

As members of an unusually large and constantly increasing family, many of the Author's young kindred, in the natural course of events, will leave the parent country to swell the ranks of those bold, hardy spirits who (whatever their individual fortune or merits) slowly but surely are completing the civilization of the Western World: for them, in all affection, was this little diary written.

It has been suggested that its publication might possibly afford some useful hints to others, as well as to his own family. For such does he publish these sketches of his experience in a foreign land; holding himself well recompensed should one brave "Brother Adventurer" extract therefrom one useful hint—one gallant lad be cured of some false idea, or saved from disappointment.

TEMPLE, LONDON, 1868.

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A LONG VACATION

IN

THE ARGENTINE ALPS;

OR,

WHERE TO SETTLE IN THE RIVER PLATE STATES.

CHAPTER I.

Introductory.

LAST year was a bad year for many besides myself, notably for such as had been induced to invest in bank shares, or other "things" pertaining to the "gorgeous East." Not much less did many home speculators suffer, dazzled by what has proved to be the equally ephemeral glitter of five and six per cent. in British railroads. By temperament and circumstances an "adventurer," of course I "dabbled" in the City, was attracted, and singed. My shares declined, my bank was "bulled" or "beared," and finally broke, which caused me to reflect whether some other country might not be kinder than "the Mother;" whether there might not be some other place where I

might make more, or at any rate spend less: for after a few years' successful career as an itinerant "counsellor" in India, where briefs are plenty and fees large, it can hardly be wondered at that "a day with the Duke" had far more charms for me than a probably profitless attendance at Westminster; where, for the generality of juniors, briefs are anything but plentiful, and fees decidedly small. Now, though I liked India well, and was fairly successful both as an "adventurer" and afterwards at the bar, the Indian Mutiny swamped the first career, cruel bereavement and attendant broken health finished the latter, so that I had neither heart nor constitution for India more. Twice I had visited Australia, and though delighted with the country and colonists, it must be admitted Australia is a long way off, and I thought my profession was much overdone, as well as most other occupations there. Where, then, should I go?

Some men in the smoking-room at the club were talking of the River Plate: the enormous territory of the Argentine States; their scanty population and silly wars; vast flocks and herds, delicious climate, fruitful hills and plains; high mountains teeming with yet undeveloped mineral wealth, copper and silver, iron, lead, and gold.

On the library table, too, I chanced upon a good practical and interesting book* on the coun-

* Mr. Wilfred Latham's book.

try, its resources and advantages for emigration; so, setting down at once, I made a calculation, and having convinced myself that after seeing the Derby, the trip to Buenos Ayres would be a positive economy of time and money, and that I might examine the "Plate States" from Monte Video to the Andes, and yet return in time for the "back end" with the grouse, not to mention the autumn term. I called on that good gun-maker and fine old English sportsman, Mr. H. Holland, of Bond Street, and commissioned him to fill me lots of cartridges from No. 6, for the frequent partridge in the breezy "campo," to buck shot for chance deer, ostrich, and perhaps a "red skin" from the grand chaco. Possessing a pair of his central fire breech-loaders, I ordered his most killing novelties in the way of a revolver and bowie knife, for I had heard of the rough play on "Gringos"* of larky gouchos in their cups. Then recommending possible future clients to the careful consideration of the gentleman whose chambers in the Temple it is my good fortune to share, and being assured by him (with a strong suspicion of a smile) that their interests should not suffer by my absence, I wrote to Liverpool, and engaged a passage in the good steamship the "F——," to sail on the 4th of the following month (June, 1867). I chose the Liverpool line as the more economical

* New-comers.

and quicker route, these vessels very generally going direct to Monte Video and Buenos Ayres, whereas the "Royal Mail," as well as the French packets from Bordeaux, call at Lisbon, St. Vincent's, Pernambuco, Bahia, Rio de Janeiro, and commonly some other ports on the Brazilian coast; besides, I had taken the pleasures of the Brazils in years gone by, and also I anticipated returning to England by the same, and so by way of Lisbon and Madrid to Paris and London.

CHAPTER II.

Reflections on some Things in General, especially Negroes.

Behold me, then, in Liverpool, in the Adelphi Hotel, but not for long; for in Mentone, the preceding winter, I had the good fortune to form one of those pleasant foreign friendships with a merchant prince, a very prince of merchants, Mr. ——, of Liverpool. No sooner did his kind wife hear of our arrival, than, on hospitable thoughts intent, she hastened to us, so soothing, petting, and caressing my "belongings," that they became resigned, if not quite reconciled, to the somewhat extensive and indefinite leave of absence I was granting myself. The dear lady then and there insisted upon taking us across the river, where the various diversions and the pleasant society of her beautiful English country home left no time for low spirits or gloomy forebodings, all that kind family vying with each other in amiable endeavours to lighten or avert sad thoughts of parting.

Parting! ah, the bitter word! Trust me, my brave young reader, that's the hardest part, that's the real rub. If emigrate you must, if circumstances forbid your enacting the *rôle* of a "gentleman of England, who lives at home at ease," if it be your fortune to become a "bold adventurer," then, I say, go early—go before you have "given hostages," etc. To part from father and mother, brothers and sisters, the first departure from the parent nest is hard, but natural—far harder, by the way, for the poor parents than the gallant lad—but, oh! the earnest, wistful gaze of the fair young wife you leave behind; the loving, gentle pressure of the tiny childish arms; the sweet, soft prattle of the pouting baby lips—little they think how long before again they will kiss their "Dad." Caramba! my worst enemy can't say I am very soft. My life has not been one to encourage the growth of the "sensibilities:" in Africa, in early youth, chasing or being chased, as the case might be, by runaway negroes from the coffee estates in the islands off the "West Coast;" in America, a "gambusino" hunting for gold in the "far down West and South;" in Australia, "taking up new country" among the "*harmless*" aborigines of the Northward and Eastward; in India, in 1857, lending a hand to hold our own against those sons of "Shaitan," those "brothers of the Turk," the Mohammedan,

mutinous sepoys; shooting in each quarter of the globe; leading a rough life amongst rough peoples;—such has been mine, and such a life don't tend to soften. In fact, I am bound to confess, I am one of those who would sooner see a bad nigger hanging than a good dog. But in spite of all this, I say, that many a time and oft I've wakened from my well-earned slumbers—wrapped in my blankets, possum cloak, or ponchos of the soft Becunia* wool, my couch our mother earth, my curtains the sweet fragrant branches of an algo roba, quebrache, or perhaps a blue gum tree—I say I've often wakened with a start, with ready, well-accustomed hand gripped my revolver, felt my trusty knife, and, still half sleeping, all bewildered, strove to think, to realize the subject of my fears; then by degrees I learnt that I was only dreaming, that 'twas fancy that I once more endured that bitter test, that cruel parting; so wiping the thick sweat caused by my agony, almost unwittingly I've prayed for those poor, helpless, little ones, and then a pleasant, soothing, trustful calm has seemed to fill me, and I've sunk again to peaceful slumber: may I not hope equally cared for by the great Powers above as ever a nigger-loving radical and low church, self-elected priest—pharisaical, void of all charity, swathed in

* One of the Llama or Alpaca tribe, wild in the province of Catamarca, and on the Chilian, Brazilian, and Bolivian frontiers.

fine linen sheets—sharing with pale and angular, or rosy Dutch-built spouse, a bed of softest down; dreaming, too, perhaps, of collecting money from some of those fat, fair ladies who love to meet in Bath or Cheltenham, and talk of the faults of frailer sisters and naughty men, and dwell upon the virtues of unctuous "Stiggins;" and who, while kindly eager to devote a portion of their charity to warmly clothe their oily, coloured "brother," always ignore that that interesting heathen, born in a sunny clime, and not altogether unreasonably preferring his "naked beauties," will soon exchange the charitable but misplaced gift for a "trifle of spirits," little recking whether the subject of his barter be his own pantaloons, his wife's flannel petticoat, or his baby's Bible.

But "avast heaving," as our jolly bluff old skipper would say. Here am I almost moralizing, whilst pretending to be writing a modest "hand-book," a series of hints, a little guide or manual for younger brother adventurers, on the southern portion of the Spanish Main; better far for me to refer my reader to an abler pen. If, then, you should be curious for a description of a parting scene, read the great Master Thackeray—read that chapter in the "Newcomes" where the good colonel a second time returns to India. If you can read that without a sort of tightening about the throat and chest,

without a haziness about the eyes, don't fear that your "sensibilities" will prevent you getting on: whether that implies you are the bolder, better, quicker, *quien sabe?* I don't pretend to know. If before coming "westward ho!" you are inclined to examine or consider the natural philosophy of a black man, read Sir Samuel Baker's books; if, on the contrary, your proclivities be the other way, why, read the speeches in "the House" and out of it of some of the sympathizers with the late attempted Jamaica massacre; read some of the charges brought against the absent Mr. Eyre. But if this latter is your form, my gentle reader, take my advice and stay at home; mount the white choker, and join the trades' union of priests on strike.

CHAPTER III.

The Voyage.

THE day of my departure, the 4th of June, 1867, came in wet, raw, and cheerless, more like November than a summer morning. We said "Good-bye," and got aboard the good steamship "F——," of about twelve hundred tons burden, and bound direct for Monte Video. I learn there are sixteen first-class passengers and some half a dozen shepherds and mechanics forward. I find the "F——" a very comfortable "barkey;" she has a raised poop, with state-rooms on either side of the saloon, which is far the preferable mode of accommodation for passengers, as from the great height of the ports from the water, you can always keep them open. Of course, an old traveller, I have secured my berth on the weather side; the port side outward bound. I fixed upon cabin No. 5 first, because, from the ship's lines, I knew that would be as roomy a cabin as any; and secondly, because it is situated well "forrard"

from the screw, but not so far as to be disturbed by the continual clatter and conversation going on in the steward's pantry, bar-room, etc.

After cruising about the decks, taking one's bearings, as it were, I go below to arrange my traps, fix on the pegs for my foul-weather coats and cap, and as there are drawers under the sofa in the cabin, I stow in them my changes of linen, etc., for the next fortnight, so that I may not have to be struggling with a portmanteau perhaps in a heavy sea way. Then I fix my toilet apparatus (the simpler the better) ready to my hand, arrange my sea-going library, which always comprises small editions by Thackeray; Mr. Kingsley's "Westward Ho!" "Soapy Sponge's Sporting Tour," and Burton's "Anatomy of Melancholy." Then to make acquaintance with the gentleman who is to share my cabin, and who I was pleased to find a fine young Cambridge man, rather big for work (he was twenty, stood over six feet one, and weighed nearly fourteen stone), but a real cheery one, overflowing with pluck and hope. May your life be cast in pleasant places, Charles G——! Many a fit of blue devils your unvarying good spirits and temper have chased away for me.

The rest of our passengers comprised, of course, three or four newly-married couples, and some nine or ten young adventurers, or "gentle

shepherds," as they call them in South America; all of them sufficiently ignorant of the country they were going to, and with rather a hazy idea of what they would do when they got there, but all jolly, and seemingly without a care, full of bright dreams and energy—rare stuff for colonists—with strong tendencies to cattle driving and sheep farming. Whether individually they succeed or not, such an infusion of young blood must be of unspeakable importance and advantage to a thinly populated and undeveloped country.

Clear of Liverpool, its grand wharves, warehouses, and docks, we put on steam, and as we near the sea, the weather becomes clearer. By and by, at four o'clock, comes dinner, which was first-rate for board ship, not only on this first day but throughout the voyage. After dinner, a cheroot, and a somewhat sentimental gazing at the land—now off Holyhead. Then comes the night, and whist parties are formed. Then one pipe, one glass of grog, and bed at half-past ten.

Next morning, and, in fact, always on board ship, I rise at early dawn. The decks, though wet from washing, are uncrowded, and you get your exercise and early tea and toast in the sweet, fresh morning air, with, probably, a view of an ever novel and changing and glorious sunrise. About eight, you get your bath, and dress. Then a few minutes for your morning salutations and

pleasant chat. Then nine o'clock and breakfast; after that, one "weed." Then read or write till twelve. Then luncheon (in which I don't indulge); and then, perhaps, another smoke. Then read or write again till four, the dinner hour. Such is my life at sea, and not a bad one either—that is, if one has a purpose in it; if one is supported by a sense of duty—a feeling that we do it not altogether from choice, but to make life easier for one's wife and children; or, perhaps, in our younger days, to make it possible that we may approach the parents of that fair, trustful girl we think "reciprocates." However, on this morning of which I write, there was a strong "north-easter" blowing, which, in the course of the day, freshened to "half a gale of wind," and right ahead too, with a nasty sea on, sufficient to keep us all very quiet. I fancy most of us "confided our troubles to the deep." I always do if the weather is bad at starting, and much better I always am for the rest of the voyage in consequence. For once the weather became fine as we entered the Bay of Biscay, and so continued throughout our voyage.*

Nothing remarkable happened the whole trip. We had the usual excitements of meeting, passing, and speaking other vessels; the usual interviews

* The month of June is considered the best to start for the River Plate, as one is pretty certain of fine weather, both on this side the Equator and to the southward.

with the "monsters of the deep"—whales and bonitos, dolphins, sharks, and flying-fish. Many of the latter flew on board and were incontinently fried and eaten; also we caught some dolphins, and, agreeably with our steward's creed, we boiled them with a silver spoon, to prove or prevent (I forget which) their being poisonous. Anyhow, it appeared to me they were not much good. I always thought them dry and tasteless. Then, too, one day we had the "sport of sports" at sea: we caught a very big shark, and eat some of him too—not that he is nice by any means; but to me it's a sort of satisfaction to eat the beggar. You never know who he may have eaten. Moreover, to a man who "ploughs the vasty" as much as I do, there is no knowing but what Jack Shark may have the last of one's very self; therefore, as I said before, I always eat the beggar when I get the chance, though I don't like him. So passed on our life, otherwise calmly and dreamily, till, on the afternoon of the 2nd of July, just thirty days of a quick and pleasant passage, all was excitement, for we had viewed our Canaan—our promised land, or one of its islands, "Lobos," was in sight.

CHAPTER IV.

Monte Video.—The Harbour, etc.

"San Felipe y Santiago de Monte Video," commonly known as plain "Monte Video," has one of the most extensive and commodious harbours in the western hemisphere, and with an expenditure of a few thousand pounds in "breakwaters" at the south-east and south-west points of its crescent, it might also be one of the most secure; but at present the larger vessels (for instance, those drawing more than ten feet) lie in the outer roads, and they, as even also their smaller sisters in the inner harbour, are but badly protected from the frequent and violent "pamparas" from the south-west and south-east; and though the holding-ground is strong black mud, which must be confessed decidedly good, still, during the prevalence of the above-named gales, vessels very generally "drag," and are in imminent peril from a dangerous rock-bound lee shore. Doubtless, however, the Monte Videan government and municipality,

who show themselves sufficiently enterprising in their improvements and alterations in the city itself, will shortly turn their attention to what might be a secure, as well as extensive harbour.

The south-west point of the bay is about the centre of the shore side of the city, and is covered with buildings down to the very water's edge, a large steam flour-mill and some government store-houses being the most prominent on the south-east point. Between two and three miles across the bay rises the Mount, or Hill, from which the city takes its name, strongly fortified on all sides, and on the summit showing one of the best lights (a revolver) in these seas. Midway, inside the harbour, is a small island, called "Rat Island," on which is a large barrack, or lazaretto, for the accommodation of unfortunate arrivals condemned to quarantine—a very unpleasant probation to which all new arrivals from any part of the world are subject, for the port authorities of the Republic of Uruguay are said to be not only despotic but eccentric in their quarantine regulations; and on the occasion of an alarm of cholera a few months back, and its being reported to the gentleman in power that disease had broken out in Monte Video, the only remedy or precaution he suggested was to "close the port," that is, to subject all vessels arriving to long and strict quarantine; and upon its being pointed out to

him, that as cholera was already raging in the city, the closing of the port against healthy vessels could hardly be considered as a remedial measure, his answer was still to "close the port," "as by placing all arrivals in quarantine, we shall have fewer people to catch and spread the disease in the city"—a conclusion more considerate than convenient for passengers, merchants, or shippers.

CHAPTER V.

Monte Video, continued.—City and Country.

The city of Monte Video, the capital of the Republic of Uruguay, or the Banda Oriental, as it is sometimes called, is situated at the mouth of the River Plate. It was founded about 150 years ago, and has many fine public buildings, custom-house, arsenals, banks, hospitals, and hotels. The streets are kept clean for South America, are well paved, and lit with gas. The Republic contains a population of some four hundred thousand, of which about half are supposed to be foreigners, the Italian element largely preponderating. It contains about 7000 square leagues of territory, situate between the 30th and 35th deg. of south latitude, and the 50th and 60th deg. of west longitude.

The River Plate is its southern boundary, dividing its territories from those of Buenos Ayres, or the "Argentine Republic." On the south it meets the Brazilian Empire; on the east, the South Atlantic Ocean; and on the west, the River Uruguay divides it from Entre

Rios, also one of the provinces of the Argentine Republic, and the favourite locality for British settlers. The Uruguayan Republic is divided into thirteen departments, viz., Monte Video (the capital), Maldonado, Minas, Colonia, Salto, San José, Canelones, Paysander, Cerro Largo, Tarcuarembo, Loriano, Florida, and Durazno. At present the most remunerative pursuit is corn-growing, and agriculture generally, which is chiefly carried on in the provinces of Monte Video, San José, and Canelones. Sheep and cattle farming prevails to an enormous extent in the other departments, but I was sorry to learn not at present with profitable results, mainly owing to the rise in the price (not the value) of the lands, together with the depreciation in the price of wool, and other incidental produce. Some of these provinces are said also to contain considerable mineral wealth; but at present nothing is being done to their working or development. I do not pretend to give more than a passing notice of this fine and important South American Republic, whose independence, by the way, is guaranteed by France and England, and therefore I would refer those of my readers who desire further information to a very comprehensive little handbook, issued by the Messrs. Mulhall, the editors and proprietors of the "Standard" newspaper in Buenos Ayres, which also contains references to the various authors upon this country.

CHAPTER VI.

The Conspiracy.—The Harbour of Buenos Ayres.

As the "F——" was likely to be detained a week or so at Monte Video, discharging cargo and taking in coals, my chum, G——, and I went on shore, and took up our quarters at the Oriental Hotel, a new, extensive, and good one. Such an assemblage of the various nations of the earth, such a Babel of tongues as was carried on in that large coffee-room, I imagine could only be heard or met with in Paris during the late "Exhibition" —natives and Brazilians; English, Irish, and Scotch; French, German, and Italian; Turks and Jews; Austrians, Yankees, Africans, Chinamen, and Australians; while a trading captain from Borneo, with his Malay attendants, pretty well completed a list of representatives of all nations.

After a good night's rest, we rose fresh in the morning, and were greeted with the intelligence that we had slept through a formidable "pronunciamento" and incipient revolution; and

further, that we, the sojourners at the hotel, had had a very lucky escape of being sent aloft, Guy Fawkes fashion; for that the conspirators had conceived the idea of blowing up the president* and members of the government, and to that end had mined the "chambers," or senate house, which premises are adjacent to the hotel, and underneath the cellars of which building the mine was laid. Fortunately for us, there was another "Catesby" in this grand plot, who made his money by selling his comrades, and so this Monte Videan Guy Fawkes and his brother traitors were taken in the act, that is to say, were arrested as entering the excavations to fire the train. I was very much amused at the quiet, matter-of-fact way in which the various guests of the hotel discussed the intelligence. I suppose people in South America, in regard to revolutions, blowings up, and massacres in general, are like the eels, and become used to it.

Two or three days of the pleasures of the town of Monte Video quite satisfied G—— and myself, and being anxious to push on, we determined not to await the departure of the "F——," but to take our passage to Buenos Ayres in the local fine "all above water" American steamer, "Edward Everett." It was only a fourteen hours' passage,

* Since when, the then President, General Flores, has been assassinated, stabbed to death in open day.

and the fare was half an ounce, or £2 English, which included a most wonderful Yankee dinner of eighteen or nineteen courses, served *à la Russe*. This meal, besides every local luxury of the season, comprised many of the favourite American preserved dainties, such as bay oysters, with yams, lobsters and cream, bloaters and apple jam, codfish and brandy cherries, canvas-back duck and sweet potatoes, *cum multis aliis* too numerous for mention, some of them quite unknown to us, and marvellous to behold. I could not understand why they gave us unlimited light claret for dinner, with Madeira and champagne, with any number of *chasse cafés*, all included in the passage-money, whilst any one calling for a modest glass of ale had to pay extra, and pretty handsomely, for the same.

However, we arrived all safely off the fair city of Buenos Ayres, and were much struck with its picturesque appearance and situation. We were surprised to find, though, that the steamer, but of very light draught, not more than five or six feet, could not approach within some two miles of the shore, or custom-house pier; whilst larger vessels, including the Royal mail steamship "Arno," drawing some eleven feet, were compelled to lie some six or seven miles out. Worse than this, we found the shore-boats could not approach within a good half-mile, but transferred us and our baggage

to very high-wheeled open carts, constructed for the purpose, drawn by two poor wretched horses, immersed in the water above their withers, with nothing but their heads, I might almost say their noses only, above the water. Nothing can exceed the danger, expense, inconvenience, and delay attendant upon the landing or embarking of passengers or goods at present in Buenos Ayres; for the danger, when it blows hard, which very often happens, communication is hardly possible between the shore and the vessels in the outer roads. I have known people proceeding to Europe by the steamer lying in the outer roads, prefer the extra expense and trouble of going to Monte Video in the small local trading steamer lying in the inner roads (which also sometimes cannot be reached), and transferring themselves and baggage to the ocean steamer when it arrives next morning at Monte Video.

For expense, the lighterage for loading or landing cargo at present exceeds the cost of their freight from Europe. I was credibly informed, that the discharging and reloading of a vessel of 500 tons burden is seldom completed in a period less than from three to four months; whilst Mr. John Coghlan, the government engineer, recites, in his valuable report on the harbour of Buenos Ayres, to Mr. Consul Hutchinson, "the losses from robbery and damage to goods in the lighters and

carts are incalculable; and it not unfrequently happens that the lighters are driven, by stress of weather, to take shelter in the River Parana, and remain out three or four days, the owners of the goods on board not knowing where they are."*

Fortunately for the prosperity of this fine country, such a state of things will not be permitted long to continue, for during my visit to Buenos Ayres, a company submitted plans to the government, and offered to erect a mole and a pier, extending to the deep water, with lines of rails laid down, and travelling steam cranes, so that passengers could walk aboard, and vessels be loaded or discharged simultaneously. As the company ask for no money or guarantee from the government, but merely permission to recover some land from the ever-encroaching tide, it is probable the small concessions or privileges they demand will be granted, in spite of the violent opposition of a few gentlemen interested in maintaining the state of things as described by Mr. Coghlan, above referred to.

* See Consul Hutchinson's work on the River Plate, Appendix II., p. 293.

CHAPTER VII.

Buenos Ayres City.—Mode of Living, etc.

BUENOS AYRES is a fine but dirty city, and was founded, or rather re-founded, by the Spaniards about A.D. 1580, by Don Juan de Garay. I say re-founded, because the first Spanish settlement there was completely destroyed, and all the inhabitants massacred, by the Indians. Buenos Ayres is at present the capital of the Argentine Republic, which comprises fourteen provinces, namely, Buenos Ayres, with Cordoba, Catamarca, Tucuman, Salta, and Jujuy to the northward; Entre Rios, Corrientes, and Santiago del Estero to the eastward; and Santa Fé, Rioja, San Louis, San Juan, and Mendoza to the southward and westward. The population of the Republic is estimated at about a million, including the many foreigners of all nations, and to which the province of Buenos Ayres contributes about a fourth, pretty equally divided between natives and foreigners. The extent of territory is nearly 60,000 square

leagues, lying between the 22nd and 37th deg. of south latitude, and the 55th and 69th deg. of west longitude; and, as Mr. Wilfred Latham, in his interesting book, tells us, "the city possesses several large and handsome theatres, an opera house, concert hall, and other public buildings, including a handsome cathedral, and several large and solidly-built churches."

Having reached the shore, we had to pass our baggage through the Custom House, and where G——, to his great disgust, had to pay a duty on his new saddle of some thirty shillings. My saddles, though as good as new, had been used a few times, and therefore I had to pay nothing. We might now have fancied ourselves at Genoa or Leghorn, for numerous Italian "facchini," or porters, seized upon our various packages, and insisted upon escorting us to the Hotel de la Paix, in the Calle Cangallo, where they were as turbulent and extortionate as in the before-mentioned cities. We, however, remembering our Italian experiences, declined discussion with them, handing them over to the *maître d'hôtel* to settle with; who, after any amount of gesticulation and shricking, finally dismissed them, grumbling and laughing, with very nearly three pounds of our good and lawful money, for work which would have been thankfully done in Europe for as many shillings. The hotel is a huge pile of building,

conducted on the American principle of boarding and lodging the guests at so much a day; in this case about ten shillings. It was as good as was to be expected for the money; but I should advise my young countrymen, upon arrival at Buenos Ayres, not to go to an hotel, but rather to the "Universal," a large establishment of furnished rooms or "quarters," with a splendid bath establishment below. It is also the best situation for business, being in the Calle St. Martin, next the "Bolsa," or Exchange. This establishment finds good attendance, and gives you coffee and biscuits in the morning, charging about four shillings a day. You can either take your meals at the Strangers' Club, which admits foreigners, properly introduced, to all the privileges of the club for a month gratis; or you can breakfast and dine at the Café de Paris, opposite the Hotel de la Paix, out and out the best restaurant in South America, and with very fair charges. In fact, though an honorary member of the club myself, I generally preferred breakfasting there. As for dining, such is the hospitality of the English community in Buenos Ayres, from our able and popular minister-plenipo* to the most modest of merchants, that, during my short stay in that city, I always had a choice of invitations. By the way, here I would strongly recommend young Englishmen intending

* Mr. Buckley Mathews, since promoted to Rio Janeiro.

to become settlers, to remain in the town of Buenos Ayres as few days as possible; for the foreigners in Buenos Ayres are essentially workers, and an unemployed young man hanging about there is pretty certain to acquire the reputation, if not the habits, of a "loafer."

My letters of introduction, by great good fortune, included one to Mr. L——. This gentleman, one of the oldest English residents in South America, though entirely the architect of his own fortune, has, by sheer business capacity and integrity, acquired a prominent position among the commercial celebrities of the River Plate; and to him, and his clever and charming family, I owe most of my experiences and pleasant memories of that country. Far from one's own people, a stranger in a strange land, perhaps somewhat bewildered and fatigued by a novel or unaccustomed manner of transacting business, I know of no such delightful distraction as the privilege of intimacy with a pleasant English family, especially when among its members are two or three frank and pretty well-bred English girls.

Mr. L—— introduced me to Don A——, a native of Rioja, one of the northern provinces, but at present a merchant of high standing, and holding a consular appointment in Buenos Ayres. Amongst other vast territorial possessions, this gentleman owns a share in some of the richest

and most extensive copper mines in South America, some of the most valuable of which, situated in the Capillitas Mountains, in the province of Catamarca, he was about to visit, in company with his friend and associate in mining enterprise, Don S——. The latter was formerly the governor, and is still the largest landed proprietor in that province. These gentlemen gave me a pressing invitation to accompany them, which I readily accepted, as, besides that I found the sheep or cattle farming business, in which I had some notion of investing, very much depressed and overdone, I considered such an opportunity of visiting these almost unknown countries in such society was not to be neglected. Never could I hope for such another chance of witnessing the inner or private life, of becoming acquainted with the manners, thoughts, and feelings of the natives. So little is known, even by the natives and old-established English in Buenos Ayres, of the fine provinces we were about to visit, that Mr. L——, after making all possible inquiries among his friends, native and foreign, felt bound to seriously caution me as to the hardships I must encounter, as well as the risks I should run from possible Indians and probable revolutions; strongly urging me to go at any rate no further than Cordoba without fully satisfying myself, by competent authority, of the state of the country further on.

At the same time, in the kindest manner, Mr. L—— furnished me with letters of introduction and credit to some of the leading people there. Promising to exercise all due caution and discretion, I concluded my arrangements with Don A——, who derided all idea of dangers, other than those usually incidental to the road; at the same time expressing his great satisfaction at being accompanied by an unprejudiced English gentleman to visit and witness the beauty and richness of those countries he was so intent upon developing; frankly admitting that, in spite of many overtures, he had hitherto failed in persuading any to undertake the journey. Finally we agreed that, as he had some business affairs to arrange before starting, and as I was anxious to see something of "estancia" life and sheep-farming before going to the interior, we should meet at Rosario, in Santa Fé, nearly 300 miles on our road to Catamarca, within ten or twelve days from that time.

CHAPTER VIII.

Rosario, in Santa Fé.—San Lorenzo.

At eight A.M. of the 18th July, I left Buenos Ayres, by the Northern Railway, for the Tigré, one of a large system of creeks near the mouth of the Rio-Parana, from whence start the steamers for Rosario. The railroad itself is a miserable affair, taking some three hours to do the twenty-five miles, or thereabouts, with a stoppage every four or five miles. The carriages were on the American principle, cheap and nasty; long saloons, with rows of narrow seats, and a passage for the guard or passengers from end to end. There must have been nearly 200 passengers in the carriage I was in; all spitting, smoking, and jabbering any number of different languages; Italian and Basque-French prevailing; for all along the line are small dairy farms, for the supply of Buenos Ayres, principally carried on by those people. At about half-past eleven we reached the terminus at Tigré, and found "the

excellent new river steamer," the "Lujan," awaiting us with her steam up. We were soon on board, and under weigh, when breakfast was served, which I should have enjoyed the more but for an eccentric habit the Argentine passengers had of jobbing with their toothpicks at the olives and pickled onions, many dishes of which were on the table. An ounce (£4) was the fare, including the railway from Buenos Ayres, and a sufficiently good breakfast and dinner, besides the invariable coffee, cogniac, and biscuits in the morning. We stopped at the town of San Nicholas during the night, Las Piedras about nine next morning, and arrived at about eleven A.M. at Rosario, a well-situated town on the western bank of the Parana, founded by the Spaniards about 140 years ago. This place is rapidly increasing in importance; indeed, the "Bill" has already passed the Lower House making it the capital of the Argentine Republic. It is generally believed, however, that the Buenos Ayrean interests are too great and powerful to allow of the removal of the capital, and that the Upper House—the "Senate"—have determined to throw out the Bill.

The department of Rosario contains about 350 square leagues, with a population of some 30,000, of which about 5000 are foreigners, with about 500 English, who, however, are daily increasing. Should any of my readers require a

more full, true, and particular account of the city of Rosario, its capabilities and industries, they have the late Consul Hutchinson's work to refer to; a book redolent of statistics, and to me bewildering from its masses of figures and amount of calculations. The city of Rosario is interesting also as being the starting-point of the "Central Argentine" Railway, destined to connect Chili with the Argentine States, the Pacific with the South Atlantic. The line is already opened for traffic to Villa Nueva, about 150 miles to the westward, and next year is to be finished to Cordoba. The concessions of lands are granted to, and the works are carried on by, Mr. Wheelwright, of Messrs. Brassey and Co., the initiator and successful maker of the system of railroads on the Chilian side, and which gentleman is therefore justly regarded as a great public benefactor to the South American republics. In Rosario are some of the worst hotels it was ever my evil fortune to put up at, and at the "Hotel of the Peace"—so it was written on the sign lamp—I procured a very indifferent dinner and bed, to say nothing of their charging me a Bolivian dollar (3*s.* 4*d.*) for what they called a hot bath, but what I called a little lukewarm water, in a small vessel strongly suggestive of a soup tureen.

Next morning I was to go about twenty-five miles to visit the sheep station of Mr. ——, to

whom I had a letter of introduction. At eight A.M., therefore, I got on board the most rickety thing in diligences I ever ventured in, a dwarf and antique omnibus, with a covered box for the driver and any two venturesome passengers who might prefer to ride outside. Battered and filthy, apparently a refuge for fowls at night, I am bound to confess the "trap" travelled better than it promised. With three mules in the shafts, and four ragged-looking horses abreast leading, the way our Jehu "shoved 'em along" was a caution. We did our twenty-one miles in two hours and a quarter, including a considerable stoppage half way, where we changed our team. My fellow-passenger was the cheery old colonel of the San Lorenzo National Guard, who, in his blue frock coat and brass buttons, loose trousers, and low-crowned glazed hat, looked more like a Greenwich pensioner than any one I ever saw not there. The old fellow insisted upon my alighting to "*tomé algo cosa,*"* which necessitated my tasting some of the worst imitation of brandy possible to imagine.

Having arrived at San Lorenzo, a rising township on the western bank of the Rio Parana, famous for the fine church and convent, and as the battle-field where the republican general, San Martin, finally defeated the Spaniards, in the War of Independence of 1813, I procured a guide and

* Take something.

a fair horse and gig, to drive across the "campo" to Mr. ——'s "estancia," distant about six miles. This was my first visit to the "campo," and very much disappointed I was. The season was winter, the middle of July; and a bitter north-east wind was blowing, with a bright, scorching sun. The vast, dry plain, covered with a dense coarse grass, seemed to me quite unsuitable for sheep, and, judging from those I saw of the numerous but miserable "lean kine," not very favourable for cattle. In this last opinion, however, I was mistaken, as cattle really thrive and do well upon those rich, strong grasses, which at this time had been an unusually long period without rain, accounting for the withered appearance of the grass, and the consequent low condition of the animals; and further, I learned that after these "campos" had been fed by a sufficiency of cattle for four or five years, and regularly burnt every winter, the character of the pasture would altogether change, a lighter and shorter description of grasses and herbage appearing, affording not only suitable but superior food for sheep.

In due time we arrived, and were hospitably received at Mr. ——'s "estancia," by his friend and companion, Mr. ——, a retired midshipman, learning to be a sheep farmer. Hearing I was coming, Mr. —— had ridden over to San Lorenzo with horses for me; but we had missed one another on

the vast plain. Knowing him to be a considerable sheep and stock owner, I was rather startled at the appearance of his head station and home, which consisted of a range of three miserable mud huts and a shed, all roofed with a coarse grass, with wooden doors and shutters, but no windows. It appeared Mr. —— and his friend occupied one of these hovels, eating, sleeping, dressing, etc., in it. The second was a store-room as well as bed-room for the "capitaz" (native superintendent) and a German head shepherd, in charge of the valuable imported rams, which came to call, and followed him about like dogs. The third hut was occupied by some brick-makers and their families, for Mr. —— had been making bricks, contemplating building himself a brick house at some future period; and not before it was wanted, for he had contentedly lived in these huts for more than two years past, and they were already in some parts washed away by the rain. The shed served as the kitchen, as well as affording shelter for the rams and the five or six "peons" employed about the place. Adjoining the huts, there were three "corrals" or folds for the sheep, one for cattle, and an inclosure of some hundred acres for the cultivation of maize for the horses, rams, etc.

A dreadful and, to me, overpowering stench prevailed about the vicinity of the huts, which I

soon discovered arose from the putrefying carcases of innumerable lambs lying in the "corrals," to say nothing of the bodies of a dead foal and cow in the cattle "corral;" and within sixty or seventy yards of the hut, in full view, were the swollen and decaying bodies of five or six mares, which had died victims to the brick-making above mentioned.

Some notion of the little value set upon horse, or, rather, mare flesh in these parts, may be acquired from their system of mixing the clay for the making of bricks. A suitable piece of soil being chosen, some forty or fifty yards square, is strongly inclosed with a temporary fence. A foot or so of the surface is removed, thus forming a receptacle for the water, which is led in from the well. Some dozen or so of wild young mares are then driven in, which the "gouchos," mounted on the top of the fence, keep continually in motion with their lassoes. The mares, already excited at their unaccustomed confinement, plunge and gallop about the enclosure, until it soon becomes a quagmire; more water is let in—up to their hocks, and from thence to their bellies,—they gradually sink in the mud, still urged into continual action by the relentless "gouchos," until the soil is worked into the necessary consistency for the brick-moulds, when such of the poor brutes as by this time have not sunk exhausted, to be smothered in the

mud, are allowed to crawl away, to recover or die as they best may. The bricks are then moulded, built into a kiln, and fired; the fence is removed, and the bodies of the unfortunate equine victims are left to poison the atmosphere, until they at length are devoured by the kites and other carrion birds, which so far fortunately abound in camp, but which also are terribly destructive to the newly-dropped lambs. Still, Mr. —— and his friend, English gentlemen by birth and education, possessing some 15,000 to 20,000 sheep, and a large herd of cattle, seemed contented, or perhaps it would be more correct to say resigned, to live in this state of squalid filth and misery. I could plainly see their natural politeness alone prevented some expression of contempt for my squeamishness and ill-concealed disgust at the dreadful smell and horrible mass of putrefying matter the "peons were a great deal too busy to remove."

Towards dusk the proprietor arrived, and repeated the welcome, and dinner was announced, cooked, and brought in by a filthy gaucho, and placed on a no less filthy table, greasy and coverless. Silver forks, and spoons of silver and horn, table knives, butcher knives, bowie knives, and hunting knives, silver flasks and cups, a cracked tumbler, and two or three common earthenware mugs, composed the heterogeneous service. The salt was in a powder-horn, the pepper in a wine-

bottle; everything unwashed, foul, and hideously dirty. The dinner was good enough in itself; indeed, the "asado" (nearly half a wether roasted) was very sweet, crisp, and savory. It was served in a huge shallow pie-dish, cut into junks. Then followed the "calda" (broth), in which we soaked our hard biscuits. The calda served also in a huge pie-dish, and taken Spanish or Argentine fashion, that is, each dipped his spoon into the dish itself, including the great bearded capitaz, who messed with us; and although I don't like the fashion, I am bound to say the soup kept hot, and that all fairness and courtesy were observed in the dipping. Then came the "puchero," the *bouillon* of the soup, with some mashed maize and pumpkin mixed up with it. The repast was washed down with any quantity of sound, strong, rough claret (Catalonian wine, I think), passed round in a huge wicker-covered demijohn; and concluded with coffee, cogniac, and pipes. Vegetables or soft bread are seldom met with in camp; and though their general health is good, owing to their strong exercise and out-of-door life, the settlers are subject to nasty eruptions and diseases of the skin, notably the "rot," the effect, I suppose, of their constant meat diet. Early hours are kept in camp; so after two or three pipes, and giving them all the news I could from the "old country," we piped to bed. The

"house" boasted but of one bedstead, on which reposed Mr. —— and his friend, and though they warmly pressed me to take it, I preferred to make my couch on the floor, with a bale of empty wool-packs, when, wrapped in my skins and ponchos, of which I had a plentiful supply, I was soon supremely indifferent to the style of my accommodation.

CHAPTER IX.

Sheep Farming.

THE next morning, at dawn of day, we were all stirring, and bitterly cold we found it. Far as the eye could reach, the "campo" was white with a thick, dense, hoar frost, looking, indeed, as though there had been a fall of snow. The thermometer showed twelve degrees of frost, and the unfortunate newly-dropped lambs were perishing in numbers from the cold; many lambs died, too, from want of nourishment, as the feed was so bad, the ewes had but little milk. Altogether it was a most unfortunate time to arrange for the lambing; however, I presume there was some good reason for its being on so late. Tea, with eggs beaten up in it, or cogniac for those who preferred it, was brought round; for though there were between three and four thousand head of cattle running round and about the station, a drop of milk was never procurable. After a hasty cup of tea and a biscuit, Mr. —— and his comrade, with many

apologies, galloped off to one of the "puestos," or out stations, to mark, or cut, or count, or something, an outlying flock, returning towards dusk, tired, and ready for dinner; and from all I could learn, such is the daily life of a sheep farmer in South America. Anxious, hard, and constant work—now the lambing, then the cutting and marking, then the shearing, and always, alas! the dressing for "scab" or other diseases. So go round the seasons, always care for the flock-owner, great or small; his unremitting personal supervision is his only chance of success; and even then, I was sorry to learn (not only from my friends, but every other "estanciero," or sheep farmer, I chanced to meet), at present *it does not pay*. A livelihood, such as it is, there is; but no profit, no "brilliant future," such as in old times. The reasons for this falling off, as far as I could learn, are, the depressed state of the wool market, with the increased rent, or price for "camp," and high rate of wages; the uncertainty of the increase, now the flocks are more highly bred, with the almost utter impossibility of disposing of that increase at any price; the prevalence of scab and other diseases, from the absence of all controlling laws on the subject; and last, but not least, the inconceivable folly of the Argentine government in levying an export duty of 15 per cent. on wool, grease, and skins, thus crushing the most im-

portant industry of the country, which the merest smattering of the first principles of political economy should teach them to foster and protect.

True it is, in former times great fortunes were made, or rather accumulated, by sheep farming; but in the good old times "campo" was cheap, wages low, wool high, sheep comparatively healthy, and the Americans in the market. Now the railways enhance the price of labour faster than the feeble emigration can supply it, and shoddy, machinery, and a high protective duty, effectually exclude the "Plate" wool-farmers' produce from the United States. That things will improve, that moderate capital invested in sheep at the present low prices of the animals, with honest and skilful supervision, may even yet give a return of 10 or 12 per cent., I hope and think is probable, especially if some method of preserving the carcase for the European markets be discovered; but that sheep farming in the River Plate at the present time, and under present circumstances, is a desirable and profitable life for "enterprising young gentlemen farmers, or farmers' sons, possessing small capitals," * I am bound *most emphatically to deny.* Mr. Latham's description of the life of an "educated young man," engaged in this calling *without capital*, equally or even more justly applies

* "States of the River Plate," by Wilfred Latham, p. 194.

to the "farmers, farmers' sons, or young gentlemen with *small* capital."

In page 197 of his clever and, I have no doubt, at the time of writing, reliable work, he says—"I believe that many educated young men have come to this country under the impression that to get a 'puesto' with a small interest in a flock of sheep, is an easy matter, and at the same time a brilliant opportunity. I think it is only a duty to young gentlemen who may think of settling in these countries, to correct any such impression. To serve as a flock-tender in a solitary hut, without other means than what he may derive from his quarter interest, is not the life for a young gentleman with brains or aspirations after social position; to live alone, to be his own cook and everything else, to have no surrounding, I will not say comforts, but common necessaries of his position," etc., etc.

Now, agreeing heartily with all the foregoing, I really fail to see how the fact of the "young gentleman" having "means sufficient to purchase a flock, or half a flock of sheep," in any way ameliorates his position, considering those sheep *do not pay*. Surely it is self-evident, that the educated "young gentleman" without capital, working as a peon, or shepherd, for wages, is the better off of the two, at any rate to the extent of his wages, to say nothing of the absence of anxiety. Anyhow,

neither career can be considered at all desirable for a lad of any education, or the most moderate aspirations. In fact, among the many young sheep farmers I met, in no instance was there one satisfied, or who did not declare he would be happy again to realize his original little capital, and try something else. Still, although I do not think sheep farming is a good speculation at present, Mr. Latham's book is a good one, containing many valuable suggestions, and I strongly recommend all intending young emigrants to the River Plate to study it, but not immediately to act upon it. The book when written might have been a faithful picture of sheep farming and its prospects; but great changes are rapidly wrought in new countries. Also, I quite believe in Mr. Latham's concluding paragraph, that "there are, indeed, marvellous riches—mineral, vegetable, and animal, etc., etc.—in the River Plate." All I say is, at present put not your trust in sheep farming! Whether purchasing sheep at the present low prices, and boiling them down, will pay or no, has not yet been fairly tested.

If you have a small capital, you can easily invest it at high interest—say, from 12 to 15 per cent.—in good mortgages in the province of Buenos Ayres. Travelling costs next to nothing in the camp. You can easily live on the interest of your principal, whatever it may be. I say

travel about the camp for a year or so shooting, if you like: a traveller is always welcome; not so a loafer. All this time you are obtaining a knowledge of the country and its resources, the people and their ways and language; and you will soon be competent to judge for yourself as to investments in business. If, on the other hand, you have no capital, employment is, at any rate, far more easily attainable than in Europe, and living far cheaper. I heard much in England of the many clerks that emigrated to the Plate, and how there was no field there for such a class. Now, without possessing any personal knowledge on this subject, I can only repeat, that many of the leading merchants in Buenos Ayres assured me that good clerks were much wanted, and could command high salaries, commencing from three or four hundred a year; but the clerks required are men who are either book-keepers, or who have learnt their business, having some special knowledge of hardware, or soft goods, or Manchester goods, or other mercantile matters. The "Plate" merchants naturally decline engaging over-dressed, dissipated-looking youths, who claim to be clerks, on the strength of being able to add up a row of figures, and more or less incorrectly copy a letter. For such young gentlemen I should rather recommend a shot at the competitive examinations for the Indian or home civil services; at any rate,

that costs nothing. *Quien sabe* whether they might not, by good luck, professing piety, a preference for "niggers," and clever subordinates, become governors-general of India or Jamaica; at any rate, it is quite as likely as that they would make fortunes in the River Plate.

CHAPTER X.

Cattle Farming.—Goucho Horsemanship.—Shooting.

NEXT day was devoted to initiating me into all the mysteries of cutting, marking, etc., of the home flocks; but as I do not pretend to give more than a passing notice of sheep farming, I shall not trouble my reader further on this head, satisfied with having referred him to Mr. Latham's work, the best I know on sheep breeding and management in South America. Towards evening we went out for a couple of hours' partridge and duck shooting, and here I first met the large partridge of the camps; a fine bird, larger than an English pheasant, but much the same shape and colour as his smaller brethren, who are also very plentiful, and to me seemed very similar to the common English grey. There were two lagoons about a mile from the huts, on which were innumerable duck of great variety, at which we got some "family shots." We were shooting "for the pot,"

of course; when we returned home it was with game enough for a week.

After dinner we planned an excursion to ride post to a large cattle estancia, about twenty-five leagues distant, situate on the River Barrancas, a tributary of the Parana. We started at daylight next morning, Mr. —— mounting us to the first post-house, from whence we hired, paying about two reals, or tenpence a horse, for each post, which are distant about four leagues. We did every post of twelve miles at a gallop; but, in spite of that, we were benighted at the fifth, owing to the delays at the changes, as they had to search for and drive in the fresh horses from the camp. It was my first ride after landing from board ship, and I must confess the quick sixty miles made me quite willing to stop anywhere and for any reason. The post-house happened to be a good one; the proprietors comparatively well-off, respectable graziers and farmers, though but little differing from the mere "goucho" in appearance, manners, or style of living. They were civil and hospitable, immediately offering the maté,* and inviting us to stay the night; they then assigned us a hut, and soon produced us a supper very similar to the dinner described in the last chapter. One pipe

* Maté is the yerba, or Paraguay tea, in universal use in South America. It is almost in dust, is made in a small gourd about the size of an orange, and is sucked through a "bombilla," a long silver tube with a perforated end.

after supper, and we were all very glad to turn in on the comfortable-looking hide stretchers, soon lulled to sleep by the melodious but monotonous twangle of the gouchos' guitars in the adjoining hut. Next morning, at daylight, we were up ready for a start. I felt rather stiff, but a large silver pannikin of hot "coffee royal"—*i. e.*, coffee with brandy in it—soon made me feel full of going. Mr. —— was a fine Spanish scholar, and had fraternized considerably with our hosts, who therefore took sufficient interest in us to point out good horses. Commonly we had to select out of a "tropilla," or mob; when the goucho would lasso them, and we had to saddle them and take our chance. It was well for me on this morning that I had a free mount, for our English hunting spurs have no effect on a South American horse in his winter coat; and my back, arms, and shoulders were far too stiff to use the "revenche" —the strap and buckle used as hopples and whip. We had but five leagues to gallop, and though it was bitterly cold, the rapid motion soon made us warm, and able to enjoy the sharp morning air. Herds of deer, like fallow deer, but rather smaller, were on every side. They seemed very "skeary," and we never got anything like within shot, though I believe they are easily stalked on foot. Many South American ostriches, too, we saw; and at almost every stride through the long coarse

grass we flushed partridges large and small, quail, large green doves or pigeons, and other birds unknown to me; indeed, so grand a shooting ground I never saw. Soon we came to a large lagoon, literally covered with flocks of different sorts of ducks and other waterfowl. On the reedy, sedgy sides stalked cranes, pelicans, flamingoes, and something like a heron; countless snipe were flitting here and there, and the huge blue-grey bustard, erroneously called wild turkey, walked pompously about. This is no "sporting tour," so should any sportsman chance to read, let him turn to Mr. Hinchcliffe's pleasant book. He was a mightier Nimrod, and had more time to shoot than I had. Except at the post-houses, or a chance "puesto," we never saw a human being; hence the tameness of the feathered tribes. I could not learn that, within the memory of the oldest inhabitant, a sportsman had ever visited, or a gun ever been fired on these lands.

At eight A.M. we reached the home station, or estancia house, of Señor ——, who was acquainted with my companion, and warmly welcomed us. Señor —— was a native of the province, had been an estanciero all his life, had a wife, and lived very comfortably in a large brick house, well roofed with tiles. The house comprised one large hall for eating, etc., and three or four sleeping-rooms; no glass window, but shutters and doors

all opening to the air; but altogether sufficiently snug when closed. After breakfast we went to the "corrals," to see them cutting and branding a lot of young cattle. The gouchos showed great skill in using the lasso; picking out a beast in the middle of a crowd, and dexterously dropping the noose over his head or horns; or when an animal, already lassoed by the head, was kicking and plunging, another would throw his lasso under, catching him by the foot in a most wonderful manner, and then, apparently with a mere turn of his wrist, bring the beast to the ground. The horses showed great intelligence and docility, and the foot-men, cutting and branding, immense activity; but it seemed to me they cut badly and carelessly, seldom troubling themselves to sear the wound; still, I was informed the casualties in consequence did not average above two or three per cent.

The cattle were of fair size, with very long horns,* and in good condition; but they did not appear to me anything like as fine or well bred cattle as the Australian. Yet I hear the River Plate hides are thicker, and command a better price in the European markets; but, in spite of that, whilst the 15 per cent. export duty continues in force, the River Plate settler cannot hope to

* In South America, as in Spain, the oxen are yoked to, and draw from, the horns.

compete with the Australian or Cape of Good Hope grazier with his hides and tallow. The "Carizal" is well situated on the highroad to Santa Fé, the capital of the province, and directly on the road and river for the seat of war in Paraguay, where there is a great demand and consumption of cattle; therefore of late the graziers in these districts have had exceptional advantages in the way of a local market. Señor —— told me he had been getting 38*s*. a head for fat cattle; but, though that is considered a fair price, and though his herds are something like 8000 or 9000 strong, he assured me he did little more than earn a livelihood, and pay his expenses. The staff for a cattle station like his, he informed me, under the personal superintendence of the owner, was two "mayordomos," or capitazos, at thirty hard dollars a month, with five horses each, and a man at twelve dollars, and five horses, for every thousand head.

I was much disappointed with South American horses and goucho horsemanship. The horses, though hardy and enduring, are generally small, plain, and slow; and as horsemen the gouchos are very "mountebanky." The goucho rides altogether by balance, with a very loose seat, using his small stirrups only for the purpose of mounting. He always rides, as it were, for a fall, and certainly he always falls on his feet. His horse is

often weak, oftener over-weighted; the goucho always rides full gallop, and as the camp is full of holes—made by the biscacho, a burrowing animal about the size of a rabbit—his horse frequently falls, when, if it were not that the goucho always falls, or rather alights, on his feet, he would frequently break his neck or limbs, which he often deserves to do, for he is the most callous, brutal, and careless horsemaster in the world; so different from the Arabs, or even the Hindoos, some of whom, by the way, are bad enough. With all their goucho horsemanship, Mr. —— and his reckless young friend, the retired midshipman, stuck to the buckjumpers just as well, while for "fencing" the gouchos are nowhere. I never saw one who could sit a horse over a hurdle without flying into the air in a most ludicrous manner. After all, the buckjumpers, though specially chosen for the performance from the wildest of the wild mares, did not buck half so strongly, though quite as viciously, as the Australians.

One performance of the gouchos, however, was really startling. The entrance to the corral was closed by five slip rails, in place of a gate, fitting into mortised posts as in England, save that the highest was some eight feet from the ground. Among the mares in the corral was one great black five-year old, well-bred and vixenish-looking, standing over fifteen hands high. She was

already very excited at her unwonted confinement in the corral. Speaking a word or two to his capitaz, Señor —— called us outside, when a goucho, in huge spurs, and having only a heavy revenche in his hand, clambered on the top slip rail, standing on this so far towards the centre that he could just balance himself by touching the side post. Another goucho let down the under four rails, then, entering the corral, he swung his lasso in the air, and away with a rush went the mares, making for the gateway. Watching his opportunity as the mares passed under him, the goucho on the top rail dropped down safely mounted on the vicious black, who seemed so utterly astonished that she appeared for a moment to slacken her speed; down went the heavy revenche on her starboard flank, when, with a scream and two or three tremendous bounds, away she went, head down, across the camp. No less excited seemed her reckless rider, as, yelling like a demon, continuously flogging and spurring, he and his mount rapidly passed out of sight. Señor ——, however, assured us they would soon return, which they did in about a quarter of an hour, the mare staggering, seemingly exhausted, but still showing the whites of her eyes, and, with ears sloping back, looking vicious enough, but quite under command, and easily guided by the application of the revenche on either side of her

neck. The goucho dismounted by sliding off the mare, still in motion; he seemed perfectly cool, and not at all aware he had done anything out of the common. Not so the mare; covered with foam, her quivering flanks bleeding and striped with huge wales, after a few yards she stopped, as though bewildered, then, smelling about the ground, she kneeled, snorted, and rolled, at first feebly, afterwards more energetically; in three or four minutes she arose, shaking herself vigorously, then, as we advanced towards her, she flung her heels high into the air, and bounded away as madly as before, never slackening her headlong speed so long as we could sight her; and Señor —— told us she probably would not pull up until she joined her equally scared companions, long since out of sight.*

* This exhibition was given as an ordinary specimen of goucho horsemanship, but I never saw it repeated, though somewhere I have read General Rosas used to perform the feat.

CHAPTER XI.

Return to Rosario.—Frailè Muerto.—The Indians, etc.—Murder of Mr. Edwards.

On the following morning, at early dawn, we started homewards, where we arrived late at night, all pretty well tired out with our three days' ride. However, a good night's rest set me all right, and next day I started again for Rosario, where I met Dons Samuel and Adolfo ready to commence our northern journey, which we did next morning, by the Central Argentine Railway, at seven A.M. The country over which we travelled was the same level plain, covered with sheep and cattle, with here and there herds of deer, ostriches, and any amount of pigeons, plovers, snipes, and partridges.

We arrived at "Fráilè Muerto,"* the then terminus, at about three in the afternoon, and found we should have to pass the night there. As there were so many passengers bound up

* Dead Friar.

country, we could not have a carriage to go post ourselves, but must take places in the diligencia, which started at daylight next morning.

The hotel accommodation for travellers at Frailè Muerto was very limited, an enterprising Italian (with an uncommonly pretty Basque wife, by the way) was the proprietor. As he had to advance with the railway, his belongings had to be as movable as possible. With the exception of a large boarded tent, or canvas-roofed hut, which served as a bar and dining-saloon, the rest of his peripatetic hotel, bedrooms, kitchen, etc., were on wheels. Three or four large carts, similar to the travelling photographic-carts not uncommon in England, were fitted up with bunks all round, "alow and aloft," like a troop-ship at sea. Our party secured four of these, and our "bedroom" was filled up by some Argentine military officers, on their way to join their regiment, some at Mendoza, others at Cordoba, etc. They seemed all good-natured, chatty, light-hearted comrades, but not much in love with their profession, or service.

After luncheon, we went out to see the diligencias packed. This is the road from Buenos Ayres to all the other States of the Republic, and some seven or eight diligencias were being stowed, as well as a great fourgon, or break, we hired, as we necessarily had a great deal of luggage—pro-

visions, wines, saddles, beds, guns, furs, etc., etc. The stage carriage, or "diligencia," service of the Argentine Republic is a monopoly, in the hands of a Chilian, and nothing could be more disgraceful than the manner in which the service is carried out. The conveyances are strong and comfortable, and well fitted for the work, but overcrowded. They are huge Yankee omnibuses, with a banquette for the driver and two passengers. They are drawn by lasso only, no other harness; seven, eight, or nine starved and wretched horses, each mounted by a goucho, drag from the surcingle of the "recow" (the native saddle). The horses are a long way from their work, and generally can crawl but slowly, though always cruelly punished and urged by their relentless riders. Such a reckless arrangement and expenditure of horse power I never saw. The fare was about two pounds for the journey, including the two nights' lodging in some wretched post-house, if one happens to reach it—or otherwise, any wayside rancho. There is also included in the fare some two shillings a day for meals provided by the conductor. The traveller, however, must carry his own breakfast—his bread, wine, coffee, and such other luxuries, as the conductor's meals only comprise masses of roast and boiled meat and broth.

All men and travellers in these parts go

heavily armed, for about here we are only some four or five leagues from what may now be called the southern Indian frontier, and of late the Indians have been very bold and troublesome, making frequent raids into the territory of the Argentine Republic, murdering the males, and carrying off the women, stealing the horses, cattle, and goods of the unfortunate settlers, and that hitherto with impunity. This state of things is most disgraceful to the Argentine national government, who appear satisfied with having erected a line of frontier forts, apparently not deeming it necessary to man them; and indeed, to do so, except with good, well-mounted light cavalry, would be no use, as the Indians deride the forts altogether, at their pleasure passing between them, even sometimes going under their very walls, and threatening the few "peons" locked up in charge of them.

Individually, these Indians are a wretched, filthy, stunted race, formidable only when in large bodies, and for the wonderful rapidity of their movements; light weights and extraordinary horsemen (far superior to the goucho), their only baggage or equipments their spears, boleas,* and

* "Boleas" are two balls about the size of cricket-balls, of stone, covered with hide, and connected by a piece of hide about three feet long. The Indians cast these extraordinary distances, and with marvellous accuracy, almost invariably throwing the animal they aim at.

lassoes. Utterly reckless of horseflesh, which they renew by robbery, they sweep down unexpectedly like a torrent, driving and collecting all the animals in their unchecked course, murdering the men, and carrying off the women and children; then returning as rapidly to their own fastnesses in the far south, leaving desolation and misery behind them. In spite of this, a few British settlers having invested their money in these frontier lands, still doggedly and bravely hold on, their only hope, that in the course of time the Indians, becoming bolder and more sanguinary by impunity, may go too far, and at last goad the Argentine government into taking some decisive steps to exterminate them. Sorry am I to say that our bold countrymen, getting used to live in this continual state of alarm and danger, become more or less used to it, and so too venturesome and careless in consequence, and thus sometimes fall victims to their temerity.

These frontier lands are all vast level plains, not a tree or shrub for leagues to afford any cover for the skulking savages, who can, therefore, never approach unseen by daylight. Also, the settlers keep many large and savage dogs, which, having as great an objection to Indians as their masters, never fail to give notice of their approach. The houses now are all built in the shape and manner of small mud forts, surrounded by a deep ditch, flat

roofed, with a parapet, and loopholed for musketry. Thus protected, three or four well-armed, determined men, once safely within their houses, can and do defy any number of Indians. These mud houses, however, in the summer nights are fearfully hot, and the temptation to sleep outside is great, especially if, just before sundown, you carefully scan the horizon with your glasses, and see no "sign" of Indians.

But your dogs may take to roaming at night, and you may have omitted to take the precautionary viewing, as it happened to poor Edwards and his two servants (two English sailors), but six or seven months back. Edwards, who had but lately taken up his land in this district, the outside frontier, was living in a tent, having that very day finished his mud fort, which he intended occupying that night. Mr. T——, a neighbouring settler, had been staying with him, lending him a hand at his building, etc., and on this evening, borrowing horses from Edwards, had returned home, some few leagues off. It is reported, I don't know how truly, that the poor fellows celebrated the completion of the house with a little festival, and so possibly were not so much on the alert as they otherwise would have been. Anyhow, the next evening, an Irish "peon" (servant) of Mr. T——'s brought back the borrowed horses. On approaching, the man noticed an unnatural and

chilling stillness; no usual loud and cheery greeting from the tars, no dogs with their ferocious welcome. He also noticed the tent no longer stood; but that, of course, might very well have now been struck, the house being finished. Feeling uneasy, but never dreaming of the truth, the man instinctively changed his saddle from the tired horse he rode to the best and freshest horse of the tropilla, and to this he afterwards owed his life. Advancing to the trench which surrounded the fort, he shouted, calling out and rating at the supposed inmates for not appearing to receive him and the horses. Obtaining no reply, he happened to glance downwards, and there he saw what stopped all further utterance. Naked, and hardly to be recognized from their many wounds, lay the dead bodies of his three brave countrymen. Transfixed with horror, nerveless and powerless, he comprehended nothing else. He took no note of "Indian sign," though wreck and ruin, dirt and blood, were all around in horrible profusion. Not many seconds, however, was poor Pat allowed to rest in helpless, vacant contemplation. An old frontier's man, he had no need to look towards the corrals to learn from whence came that hellish yell. A picket of some forty Indians, hidden by the high bush fence of the corral, and busy at their filthy feast of half-raw mare's flesh, just now espied

him. Pat had a few yards' start. The niggers had to lasso, then to bridle (the brutes don't use a saddle)—that gave Pat one priceless minute, and off he galloped.

Would I had the pen of "Geoffrey Hamlin's" gifted author, to describe the ride; but I have neither that, nor time or space, to give the details of this fearful race for life. Should Pat not win, these wretches would surprise the district; then, *quien sabe* where the massacre would end? Fortunately, the night was falling fast, and Paddy's horse, a good one, full of going. With "light hand and merry heel" Pat nursed and lifted, till pitying darkness at length overtook them, and they fell from sheer exhaustion—man and horse lay prone upon the ground. For hours they lay there, listening to the yelling heathens prowling, searching, thirsting for their blood. At length the baffled wretches turning, retreated, eager to reach their own country with such plunder and female prisoners as they had, ere the alarm, "Los Indios," should go forth. Towards daylight, Paddy took heart, arose, and crawled to Mr. T——'s, who at first would hardly credit the horrid story. Afterwards, however, he collected some few gentlemen, his neighbours, and started that day in hopes of overtaking the Indians, and avenging his friends' death. No such luck, though. When they arrived at the whilom

station, nothing was there but ruin and the already festering bodies of their murdered countrymen, with which they sorrowfully returned to Frailè Muerto for decent burial.

It is only since our countrymen have settled in these parts, and stocked the camps with cattle, that the Indians have come so far north, their own proper country really being some sixty or seventy leagues to the southward. The British settlers are now naturally disgusted with cattle-raising for their Indian customers, and are taking to corn-growing, for which the camps about here are specially adapted. So it is to be hoped the Indians will cease visiting them when they find there are no animals to steal. Anyway, three or four small, properly-equipped movable forces—flying columns of five or six hundred men each—would soon destroy, or effectually cripple, all these Indians, and I believe the present government only await the conclusion of the Paraguay war to undertake some such enterprise.

CHAPTER XII.

Travelling by Diligencia.—Villa Nueva, etc.

At daylight next morning we started in the diligencia for Cordoba.* The camp was very dry, the feed bad, and the horses wretchedly low in condition. Our progress was, therefore, necessarily very slow. There were frequent alarms and shouts of "Los Indios." However, I saw nothing; but they had been in the vicinity a few weeks before, and a few Englishmen had got up a party of some fifty gouchos, to go out and meet them. One of the English gentlemen of the party related to me how that they came on a small party of Indians, numerically less than the gouchos, when the latter immediately turned tail, and commenced a confused and disgraceful retreat, leaving the three or four Englishmen to bear the brunt of the Indians, who immediately advanced. Fortunately, there was a river in their rear, with banks some forty or fifty feet high, and these banks the Englishmen charged, and were all for-

* Cordoba, or Cordova, as the Argentines, and, indeed, many Spaniards, use the "b" and "v" indifferently, either in writing or pronouncing.

tunate enough, by dint of scrambling and falling, to get clear away. Not so, however, the gouchos; afraid to charge this formidable-looking leap (more formidable in appearance than reality) they were overtaken by the Indians, and panic-stricken, their throats were cut almost without their offering any resistance.

Had the Indians really appeared near our road, we should have had a roughish time of it, for our postilions would have most assuredly cast off the lassoes and bolted, and we were not above four fighting men in the diligencia. However, before long we had passed what was considered the dangerous portion of the road, and then we had some breakfast.

All day long we went crawling, struggling on, but were benighted after all before reaching the regular post-house, which was no great loss, however, as we slept at a fine old estancia house, formerly owned by the Jesuits, and kept by the dirtiest and fattest, but most good-natured old woman I ever saw. She was half Indian, half negro. Dirty and filthy as the house was, it contained some old Spanish high-backed carved oak chairs, sideboards, etc., which would make the fortune of a Wardour Street Israelite. The cups, plates, and basins were of pure and solid silver, though generally as black as a saucepan. I found afterwards that nearly every "rancho" (hut) to the northward, however poor and dirty, generally

had a silver vessel or two knocking about in it. The old lady soon had a sheep killed and roasted, and as we carried plenty of accessories, we had a fine supper; but then, tired as we were, we had to sit up until midnight, when our fourgon, with the luggage and beds, made its appearance. It was very tedious work, as I could as yet only speak a few words of Spanish, and none of our party could speak anything else. Afterwards, however, I found Don S—— remembered a few words of Latin, which helped us on amazingly, and in two or three weeks I had acquired sufficient Spanish to converse to a certain extent.

Next morning, at daylight, we were off again, breakfasting at Villa Nueva, now the terminus of the Central Argentine Railway, but then crowded with workmen building the station, sheds, laying down the rails, etc. About Villa Nueva, we crossed a belt of fine forest timber, extending only some three miles across, but many miles long. Vast stacks of wood were being sawn and piled for the construction and consumption of the railway. After leaving the wood, the country was again flat and treeless, as before described; but towards evening we viewed high sierras to the northward of Cordoba, which city, after passing another night in a wretched post-house, we reached at nightfall of the next (the third) day from Fraile Muerto.

CHAPTER XIII.

Cordoba.

Cordoba, or Cordova, if not the largest, is the handsomest city in the Argentine Republic. Founded by, and formerly the head-quarters of, the Jesuits in South America, of course it has a magnificent cathedral, many fine churches, convents, and schools. The university was the favourite Alma Mater, not only of the Argentine youth, but also for the young members of the best families in the neighbouring states of Chili, Peru, and Bolivia. When the Jesuits were recalled, however, it lost its prestige as the head seat of learning of South America, and its trade also declined to a very low ebb. Next year the Central Argentine Railroad will have its terminus in Cordoba, thus placing it in direct steam communication with the ports of Rosario and Buenos Ayres, and this city will then rapidly increase in importance, and, from its central position and great inherent wealth, will soon become one of, if

not quite, the first city in the republic; in fact, no doubt the upper provinces will make a struggle to have it appointed the capital, and next session we shall see whether Buenos Ayres or the upper provinces are to have their own way. From all I could learn I am inclined to think that either the present constitution of the republic will be changed or broken up, or that Cordoba must become the capital at some no very distant period.

The province contains some 5000 square leagues, with a population of about 60,000. The climate is mild and healthy, although the city, from being situate in a deep hollow (apparently the former bed of the river), is hot, and, if crowded, would no doubt become unhealthy. There are, however, many beautiful elevated sites in the immediate vicinity, which would make charming and healthy suburbs. Cordoba is a fine corn and cattle growing country; the finest draught oxen in the republic are bred in this province. To the northward and westward it is beautifully wooded, and its neighbouring sierras contain many silver, lead, and copper mines, some few of which are worked, but in a very slovenly, desultory, and incomplete manner. Sheep do not thrive in the province of Cordoba, but some few people, less idle than the general run, keep vast flocks of goats, which, from their wonderful yearly increase (each doe producing from five to eight

kids a year), pay well by their tallow and skins; though even yet the goat skin and tallow trade of Cordoba is quite insignificant to what it might and probably will be. A Belgian company have lately purchased some thirty or forty leagues of land on the Rio Cuarto side of the province, upon which they have placed great flocks of Angola goats, imported from the Cape. The superintendence is entrusted to a gentleman, an Englishman, from the Cape of Good Hope. The establishment is too lately formed to tell us any results as yet.

An American gentleman is amassing a large fortune from tanneries. The River Plate Bank has an agent, and there is a Dr. Gordon, the English vice-consul, established in Cordoba; and, with one exception (a Scotch merchant settled near Barrancas), I could hear of no other Englishman to the northward of Cordoba. But already disappointed sheep farmers are beginning to turn their attention to this rich and undeveloped country, and, doubtless, ere long there will be many enterprising, energetic Englishmen adding to the strength and prosperity of this fine province.

In the plaza is a capital French hotel, the Hotel de Paris, and the civil and attentive French landlady quite won my regard by immediately proffering me what she called the "Englishman's bath"—a mighty tub, which, filled with hot water, was inexpressibly grateful, after the three days'

incessant dusting and jolting we had experienced in the diligencia. The landlord, a Frenchman, was a capital cook, and altogether I very much enjoyed my twenty-four hours' rest at Cordoba, lounging at the capital club, visiting the numerous handsome churches, and listening to the grand musical services at the cathedral. The city at present is wonderfully dull, quiet, and sleepy. Cordoba boasts of no sort of place of amusement. Seemingly very few people have any work to do, and very few of those who have work appear to do it; in fact, it is generally said that "in Cordoba the men only talk politics, the women only go to church."

CHAPTER XIV.

Pedro—Jesus Maria—The Jesuits in South America.

NEXT morning we managed to secure a light, Yankee-built omnibus to ourselves, and so travel post, stopping when and where we chose, and hiring as many extra horses as we could procure, or chose to pay for. Putting, then, five horses to our omnibus as well as our fourgon, we rattled out of the city of Cordoba most cheerily, to the merry music of Pedro's bugle. Pedro was our capitaz, and surnamed the "bandy-legged," from the extraordinary circle described by his legs, which had three times been broken in as many places (pieces, I might almost say). Once by the shaft or pole horse he was riding falling on him, and thus preventing his getting out of the way of the carriage, which crushed his legs. This is not an uncommon accident for the man who rides the wheelers, when six, seven, or eight horses are attached, going full gallop over execrable roads,

full of holes and stumps; and when the horse, perhaps tired and overweighted, does fall, his being fastened to the pole will likely prevent the goucho clearing himself immediately, as he otherwise always does. Pedro is the most cheery and enduring specimen of those most enduring and hardy men, the gouchos of the north, I ever fell in with. For their endurance, I have known these men ride postilion for two days and two nights without other rest than the two hours we devoted each day to our two meals, and the few minutes occupied at each post changing horses. Nor could these intervals be considered other than a change of labour; for at every change they had something to do for us—to bring fire or water, to make maté, or tea, or coffee, to mend a buckle, or improvise a strap; whilst at meal-times they had to collect wood and water, perhaps seek eggs, catch poultry, and not unfrequently slaughter a sheep or bullock, before commencing to cook our meal and that of their seventeen or eighteen comrades, the rest of the peons employed in our services. When cooked, one pet peon would attend to each of us, handing round the spit of "asado" (roast meat), and other accessories of our meal, cheerfully waiting, and clearing away our *debris* before commencing their own hard-earned supper. So much for the endurance of the goucho; for his hardiness, he will travel with you

through the tropical heats of the plains of Salta or Bolivia, to the icy temperature of the summits of the Andes, always having the same scanty clothing, at night no further shelter than, perhaps, a rock or bush to windward; always the same hard fare—meat, maté, and tobacco—mutton and beef, with an occasional "liquor up," the drink being "aqua-diente:" no vegetables or bread vary the diet of the goucho; in the cities, in Catamarca, etc., are vegetables and fruit cheap and plentiful, but the goucho is not given to cities; none but the most worthless and depraved hang about the towns. Moreover, towns and cities are scarce in the fine countries to the northward and westward of Cordoba, and to this I attribute the immense superiority of the goucho of the northern provinces to his more dissipated brother in other parts, especially the south. Simple, hard working, docile, and easily attached, long may it be ere the northern goucho is contaminated by the Italian and other foreign scum that already overrun the camps of Buenos Ayres, Santa Fé, and Entre Rios.

As I said before, we were travelling post, and as we left Cordoba rather late in the day, Pedro counselled us to sleep at Jesus Maria, formerly a station of the Jesuits, and containing the ruins of two fine churches, school, convent, etc. In South America, as elsewhere, it is the fashion to abuse

the Jesuits, so I conclude at present "they have no friends;" but certainly, wherever the Jesuits were in South America we find the traces of a high state of order, civilization, and prosperity, succeeded in their absence by anarchy, barbarism, and the most squalid and filthy misery and poverty. Further, it is manifest that those, at any rate, brave and devoted priests had some method of subduing, controlling, or conciliating the wild and savage tribes with whom they came in contact, and upon whose lands they must have been regarded more or less as intruders; for along the Rio Cuarto, and other points to the southward, are the deserted remains of many a once prosperous estancia, sheep or cattle station, for many years peaceably farmed by the Jesuit fathers, their bailiffs or dependents, now abandoned to the Indians, who have since slain those settlers who did not show their discretion by fleeing from the vicinity of such unpleasant neighbours. To me it does indeed seem passing strange that, a hundred years ago, these priests, supported only by widely-scattered Spanish garrisons, notoriously ill clothed and armed, should have held and extended their frontiers against the then more powerful and numerous "children of the soil," whilst now that the Indians are weakened in numbers and habits by disease and drink, the boastful and pugnacious Argentine government, with their

large armies and improved weapons, cannot maintain their present frontier, defend their fellow-citizens from pillage, or exact any sort of reparation for repeated raids and massacres. However, there are no Indians to the northward of Cordoba; that is, no wild ones. Occasionally you come across a rancho, and a patch of cultivation occupied by a family more Indian in their type than common; but they are quite as civilized, hard working, and contented as their goucho brethren; and, in fact, are now to all intents and purposes merged into and belonging to that class themselves.

We arrived at Jesus Maria about an hour before sunset, and after visiting the ruined churches, monastery, etc., we sat down to a capital dinner, to which my little "Holland" smooth-bore had that day freely contributed, in the way of partridges; nor did we appreciate our comfortable quarters the less, that we knew it was the last house we should sleep in until we arrived at Catamarca, some five days' journey on.

CHAPTER XV.

The Sierras.—Indications of Gold and Silver, Copper and Iron.

NEXT morning at grey dawn, after a hasty maté for my companions, and a cup of coffee for myself, we left Jesus Maria for Las Talas, some eight leagues further on, where we were to breakfast. By a most beautiful and picturesque road, we now entered the Sierras of Cordoba; but though we were surrounded by high hills on every side, our road was merely gently undulating, as we were crossing the sierras by a "Cañada"—a winding valley, or rather indentation in the earth, which formed a most convenient "pass" through the mountains.

The levels of this country have been taken for a projected railway from Cordoba to Horketta, by a distinguished German engineer, Don Carlos Werner, who assured me the rise and fall would not average more than one in three hundred, and that there were no natural obstacles to the mak-

ing of the line. Since leaving Cordoba, our road lay constantly through beautiful forest lands, the prevailing trees being the quebracho and the algo roba. The quebracho bark contains a large amount of quinine; and the algo roba bears great pods of beans, something similar in appearance to the seed of the laburnum-tree. These beans are a favourite and most nutritious food for cattle, mules, and horses, for whose benefit each year vast quantities are collected and stored. The timber of both these trees is very fine and enduring, first-rate for building, railway sleepers, and other purposes. There are two kinds of algo roba, the Blanco and the Colorado, the latter of which is as hard as lignum vitæ. When this part of the country is further developed by the completion of the railway to Cordoba next year, no doubt these forests, which are of immense extent, will be the source of a most remunerative and extensive trade, timber being the great want of the treeless camps of Buenos Ayres, and the other southern provinces.

Along our road we saw deer of two or three kinds, innumerable partridges, large and small. Some of the former had tufted crests, and appeared to me more like a sort of pea-fowl than the large partridge of the plains. We saw many hares, too, and several birds and smaller beasts quite unknown to me. Signs of panther or leo-

pard also we came across; but we saw none of the animals in these parts. By the way, my companions always spoke of them as tigers, which they certainly are not.

An old gold-digger, I could not but be struck with the abundant "indications" of gold and silver about these parts of the sierras. Quartz, silica, antimony, mica, were to be found in profusion on the surface; and in dried-up beds of rivulets, and occasionally where the various strata were exposed in some chasm, there were the very rotten blue marl and pipe-clay, etc., we used to love to come upon when "getting at our gold" in the old days at Ballarat and the Ovens. Gold and silver, to some small extent, are occasionally brought down from these sierras; but from all I could learn, at present there is here no systematic working for minerals, although in old times the Spaniards extracted large quantities of both the precious metals.

Having wandered from the road with my rifle (a short double breech-loader, by Holland, carrying twelve bullets to the pound, and weighing about ten and a half pounds, I found far the best out of many I tried) in my hand, whilst the horses were being changed at a lonely post-house, I was fortunate enough to bag a fine young hind in capital condition, which made our gouchos' eyes sparkle, and many times they cheered in admira-

tion "Caramba!" not at my skill, be it observed, but at the prospect of a good feed of venison. My luck, too, somewhat appeased the impatience of my companions, who declared themselves very anxious to reach Talas, the post-house where we were to halt for breakfast. So, making my mind up soon to revisit these parts, and once more test my luck at gold-digging, I mounted the "banquette," where I always rode in the daytime, for the sake of the view, and after a couple of hours' galloping, we arrived at Talas, where we found a capital breakfast ready, and fresh horses in the corral, thanks to Don S——'s precaution of always sending on ahead a mounted goucho as courier.

Having appeased the good appetites produced by our twenty miles' drive from Jesus Maria, in the cool bright morning air (we were out of the regions of frost now), we inspected a flock of alpacas and llamas in a large neighbouring paddock. These animals were imported as an experiment, by Señor Alvino, from Bolivia. We were glad to find them flourishing, and to hear they were rapidly increasing, and the enterprise turning out profitable.

After our two hours' halt, Pedro again sounded "Boot and saddle," and the road here being remarkably good, and down hill, the way our six young horses tore along was a caution. I may

here mention that after passing Cordoba, we found plenty of horses, and always fresh, as travellers are very scarce to the northward, the post and diligencia only going alternately once a week for Catamarca. We soon reached Divisadero, three leagues from Talas, and here we left the main northern road, which continues to Tucuman, Salta, and Jujuy, the northern frontier province. The road to Catamarca goes from here something to the northwards of north-west. Merely changing horses at the "pozos," or wells, another four leagues brought us to the beautifully-situated post-house of Algo Robas, so called from the many fine specimens of that tree around this exceptionally large and good post-house. After taking maté with the proprietor, one Señor Bustamente, a wealthy estanciero, the owner of some twenty leagues of land hereaway, we pushed rapidly on for Barrancas, which we reached about sunset, when, having had a good dinner from the venison shot in the morning, we continued our journey, wishing to be at Toscas early next morning.

Our road was still a mere track cut through the forests, but sound and gravelly. There was a brilliant moon, and our goucho postilions, encouraging one another with an occasional yell, rode at a most reckless gallop. Every now and then a tremendous lurch informed me that the road-makers had not considered it necessary to remove

the stumps of the trees when cutting the roads. Pedro, the Argus-eyed, on the near-side wheeler, proved a most consummate pilot, and my most impassible comrades seemed to take the violent heavings and jöltings quite as a matter of course, as after the due number of "papellitos," or cigarettes, and some grave converse on things in general, they quietly composed themselves to sleep for the night. Probably imperturbability, like panic, is catching, for I shortly went to sleep myself—sleeping soundly, too, until dawn, when the cheery voice of Esquimeralda, my particular goucho, shouting, "Oh! Don Enriquez, query U caffe?"* apprised me we had safely arrived at Toscas.

* "Oh! Don Henry, do you wish coffee?"

CHAPTER XVI.

The "Salinas."—Guanacco Hunting, etc.

We were now on the borders of the Salinas, which are in the province of Catamarca. The Salinas are large salt deserts, supposed to be the ancient beds of former inland seas or salt lakes. For about a hundred miles we should come to no habitation or water. It would be necessary, therefore, to do this distance at best speed, and without more than the necessary stoppages for our meals, changing horses, etc., as we could not carry food or water for our animals. The track, we knew, was sometimes deep and sandy, so that we should have to change horses frequently, say every five or six miles, so at this post-house, the Toscas, it was necessary to engage a "tropilla," or mob, of horses and mules, to drive with us as reliefs. Not wishing to be delayed on the road, we engaged four changes, or some twenty-five animals, for each vehicle, with three or four extra peons to drive, round up, and lasso them.

We were now in the country of the guanacco, or huanacco, as it is indifferently spelt. These animals are very similar to the llamas and alpacas, but lighter in build, and of a redder colour. The fur of these animals is highly prized for rugs or ponchos, and the meat is somewhat similar to venison, though generally lean and dry.

As the arrangements for crossing the Salinas, filling the water-jars for the peons, etc., would occupy an hour or two, I determined to try for a little sport, especially as we were informed that a tropilla of guanacco had been feeding in the vicinity of the post-house that very morning, of which, in fact, there was plenty of "sign." Calling Esquimeralda, who was a capital "restreador," or tracker, we picked out two of the fleetest-looking horses from the corral; then loading my little Holland rifle, and putting the peon on the trail, I followed him at an easy gallop. In about a quarter of an hour he signed me to come alongside, and pointing to a sandy hillock, a few yards in advance, whispered excitedly, "Hay, mucho guanaccos, señor" ("There are lots of guanaccos, sir"). I cautiously rode up the rise with my rifle in my right hand, ready to throw to my shoulder, and had hardly cleared the summit when I was upon them. A herd of from thirty to forty of the graceful animals were within a hundred yards of me. Heads up, sniffing the air, and spitting

vigorously, they evidently scented danger, and as I ascended the hill, ere I could raise my rifle, away they went. In a second I gave the two rear ones my right and left barrels, but at the same moment, before I could mark whether the balls had taken effect, my horse, unused, I suppose, to firearms, was rearing and plunging so madly, that very shortly we were both rolling over and over together in the deep, loose sand. Fortunately I was in no way hurt; so, speedily clearing myself and remounting, I galloped after Esquimeralda, who had passed me, and whom I could now hear yelling like a fiend somewhere ahead. A few strides brought me up to him. He had his lasso fast to a fine buck when I reached him, which he threw, and speedily commenced cutting the animal's throat, signing me to go on, and singing out, "Otro, señor; otro, un chickito" ("Another one, sir; another one, a little one").

Pressing my horse in the direction he pointed to, I soon came up to a fine-grown fawn. I am bound to admit he was not either of the animals I had fired at, though I had evidently hit him hard, for his near hind-leg was dragging, and he was bleeding profusely from his flank. Still he made good running, and I could only just manage to keep pace with him. I drew my revolver, and leaning over as near as possible, succeeded in lodging a ball in his head. He staggered and

dropped. My brute of a horse resented this second discharge of firearms by bolting with me. Luckily we were now on a clear sandy space, where at last I pulled him up. Had he run away a few yards before, when among the espino bushes, I should have been pretty well torn to pieces, for the espino, as well as the other varieties of mimosa-tree in these parts, are abundantly armed with most terrible thorns, sometimes two and three inches long.

I swung the fawn over my pommel, and rejoined Esquimeralda, who by this time had skinned and dressed the other guanacco, which proved to be unusually fat, and which he declared with great glee, and, I fancy, equal exaggeration, weighed "una quintal y media," (a quintal and a half, or a hundred and fifty pounds, English). Anyhow, we triumphantly returned to our comrades with our spoils, and they, on perceiving the game, received us with loud "vivas," the guanacco being considered a great delicacy, and a charming variety, by these beef-eating gouchos. Many panthers and a large description of tiger-cat frequent the thick jungle, or scrubs, that fringe the Salinas. Several skins were shown to me quite as large as those of the leopards of the Himalaya, but the hair was harsher, shorter, and redder, and the spots smaller and darker.

The gouchos frequently attack these animals

with their bolcas and lassoes, and despatch them with their clubs and long knives. It is not so dangerous or difficult a feat as would at first appear; for with the "boleadores" entangled about his legs, and perhaps two lassoes fast to his throat, pulling different ways and choking him, the animal is really pretty well helpless. Moreover, the gouchos generally attack the panther when gorged with food.

It was with great regret that I took so hasty a leave of these magnificent shooting-grounds. Consoling myself, however, with the determination speedily to revisit them, and that, perhaps, in the pleasant company of two or three eminent English and Indian sportsmen, for whom I had promised daily to note my observations as to the game, the lay of the country, etc. This day's sporting vividly reminded me of former happy hunting days in the plains of Allyghur and Etawer, in India, when we used to wound and "ride" the even fleeter-footed antelope.

CHAPTER XVII.

Catamarca, El Dorado of South America.

Our road now lay through "scrubs," at first dense enough, but becoming thinner as we approached the Salinas, which for about thirty miles are without any sort of vegetation, and for thirteen or fourteen miles in the centre are completely covered with a coating or efflorescence of beautiful fine nitrite salt; not the coarse-grained, dirty-looking stuff one so frequently finds in the plains of India and Australia, but as purely white, and as perfectly pulverized, as the prepared table salt used in England. The glare whilst crossing the salt plains in the sunlight was very unpleasant; but when, on my return, I recrossed the Salinas it was by night, with a brilliant full moon, and the effect was beautiful in the extreme; far as the eye could reach, spotless snow-like white, without a flaw, or speck, or sign of life. About midnight, wearied of the carriage, I had determined to ride a few leagues. The track was plain, and I had galloped on ahead and out of sight of all my

party. I had pulled up to make a cigarette; my horse (a fine Chilian), more sleepy than tired, stood perfectly motionless. Having lighted my cigarette, I sat quietly musing for two or three minutes, when, of a sudden, I seemed to become painfully aware of my exceeding loneliness; a feeling of helplessness, of awe, almost amounting to terror, seemed to oppress me. Eventful scenes from my whole past life flashed like lightning through my brain: slave chasings, shipwreck; the gold-diggings, with their gaudy hells, and ball-practice with rowdy Yankees; mutinous Sepoys, wounded Shikarries; slipping over a "khud" in the Himalayas, and being brought up standing, on my head in a snow-drift. I suppose the shock brought me to myself—for apparently horse and rider had had a nap, for I found my arms round my horse's shoulders, and my head hanging down almost on a level with my feet. Rousing myself, I wheeled my horse, and galloping, retraced my steps, singing the "Merry Maids of England" for company's sake, more powerfully than musically, I fear, until the welcome tinkling of the bells of the "madrilinas"* announced my comrades; then, giving my horse to a peon, I jumped into the carriage, and finished my night sleeping instead of dreaming.

* Madrilinas are old mares, with bells round their necks, who act as leaders, or "bell-wethers," for the tropilla of horses and mules, who always follow them implicitly.

We were now in Catamarca, the "El Dorado" of the Argentine Republic. Discovered at the time Don Philip of Spain was making advances to our Queen Mary, it was originally named "Nueva Inglaterra," and its chief town "Londres." Soon, however, our altered relations with the Spaniards caused the name of Catamarca to be substituted for Nueva Inglaterra; but the little town of Londres still exists under the same name, though no longer the capital, for which it was badly situated. The capital was since removed to its present site, and called Catamarca, identical with the name of the province, as is usual in the other states of the republic. Londres will be found on the map near Belem,* celebrated for the manufactory of ponchos, about west latitude 27 deg. 30 min., and south longitude 68 deg. 30 min. A tedious journey of some twenty-four hours carried us across the Salinas to Orkuetta, the proposed terminus of the projected Great Northern Railroad. From Cordoba, pushing on a few leagues further, we arrived at the estancia house called Don Diego, the property of Don Juan Martinez, the great frontier landholder of Catamarca. After breakfasting with Don Juan, we travelled about seven leagues further to Estanquez, where we dined, and the peons as well as our-

* The best map I have found of the Argentine Republic is that published by Edward Stanford, 6, Charing Cross, London.

selves being very tired we concluded to camp here for the night. There was no house, but in that beautiful climate we could always sleep in the open with impunity. For more than two whole days and two nights our goucho postilions had ridden without stopping, except for our hasty meals and to change horse; still they rode cheerfully and uncomplainingly, seemingly quite indifferent to fatigue. At each change two or three of them would lie flat on the ground, until in a few moments, roused by Pedro, they would immediately catch their horses, and mount again, apparently greatly refreshed by their short snooze.

Soon after four P.M. we arrived at the station of Estanquez. A few bushes were all the shelter the postmaster (a half-breed) and his family thought necessary in this beautiful climate and country. Once again we were in the forests; and from here, all through Catamarca, the country teems with game—deer, hares, pigeons, plovers, partridges, etc. As it was so early, in spite of our fatigue, Esquimeralda and I left our party preparing dinner, and strolled into the forest to look for game. Bagging a brace of hares, and five or six large green pigeons and partridges, we returned to camp, when, after a capital dinner of roast guanacco, partridges, and preserved peaches and oranges, we soon turned in, rising again at early dawn, all of us as fresh as paint.

We were now some twenty leagues from the city of Catamarca, which was Don Samuel's home, and which he was anxious to reach that evening, having been absent from his family for many weeks. The first fifteen leagues we got over cheerily enough, but the last five were a caution; deep sand up to the ankles, and though we yoked nine horses, we could not progress more than some three miles an hour; consequently we did not arrive at Catamarca City until late in the evening, long after dark, so that I could see but little of the town on our entry. The whole population seemed to turn out to greet Don Samuel, who proved to be the most influential and popular man in the province. As usual, we had sent a peon on ahead to announce our coming, and found a large house in the best quarter, beautifully furnished in the French style, had been assigned as our quarters. It belonged to a brother of Don Samuel's, absent looking after his copper mines. After a famous warm bath, prepared expressly for me (South American gentlemen are above such weaknesses), a most succulent supper, washed down by some of the local pure wines—the most delicious I ever tasted, and to which due justice was done—we were not sorry to tumble into the comfortable spring beds, which our long and somewhat "roughing it" style of journey made us thoroughly appreciate.

CHAPTER XVIII.

His Excellency the Governor Don Jesus, etc., etc.

My past life has made me a very early bird. I believe my friends, and the various hotel people in Europe where I am in the habit of putting up, consider me a great deal too early to be pleasant. Be that as it may, the first faint glimmer of dawn awakens me as surely as though an alarum were under my pillow, or "the blacks among the horses." On this morning, however, the politeness of his Excellency Señor Don Jesus Maria Espechè, Gobernardor de la provincia de Catamarca, etc., etc., proved me a very sluggard by comparison; for though I woke as usual, there was his aide-de-camp, secretary, or valet—all or either—waiting to know at what hour it would be convenient for me to receive his Excellency, "who had heard that an illustrious English traveller had entered the seat of his government" during the past night. Of course I instructed Don Adolfo to reply, in as polite and grandiloquent terms as pos-

sible, that my time, my life, and any other small belongings I might possess, were entirely at his Excellency's disposition; whereupon, shortly afterwards, made his appearance, a small, weazened old man, more deferential than dignified, who was duly announced, with all his titles, as Governor, etc. Having expressed his delight that so distinguished an English caballero had visited his poor country, he ventured to hope that I might be induced to remain some time in it—I am not quite sure he did not offer to give it to me—and he hoped that my example might cause many of my illustrious and esteemed countrymen to come and settle. Having got rid of all his superabundant courtesy, the little man really endeavoured to give me all the information he could of the province, and I believe he was sincere in his frequently-expressed desire to encourage and assist European emigration to Catamarca; especially he was anxious to induce English *gentlemen* settlers, as he declared a few of them were always a certain guarantee of orderly behaviour, peace, and prosperity in a country. He gave me letters to the principal officers of his party (the Liberals), then out in the district, in command of various detachments of militia, watching the Federals, who the Liberals of course declared were in league with the Montanaros, or outlaws, in the Andes.

I may here mention that the people of the Argen-

tine Republic generally are divided into Liberals ("at present in power") and Federals ("now wishing for power"). Unfortunately, in the northern provinces political animosities rage to an alarming extent; the party in power persecutes, and often ruins and exiles, many of the leading men of the opposite way of thinking: this, of course, leads to endless recrimination, confusion, and rioting, and terribly retards all progress and development. Both sides admit and deplore this evil state of things, but still it is allowed to continue. I don't believe the heads of parties are much to blame, and certainly it is not the mass of the population who are responsible. I believe it is the vast army of loafers, whose interest it is always to be creating and fomenting political disturbance, in hopes of an overthrow, and the accession to power of their own people. In spite of this unfortunate state of things, these revolutionists never interfere with foreigners or their enterprises; all sides seem to combine to protect and encourage them. I saw some seven or eight French, German, and Italian settlers, who had been quietly living unmolested in Catamarca, carrying on their business, and amassing comparative wealth, during the last ten years, estimated to be the most disturbed period in the history of the republic. Some of these gentlemen told me, what I afterwards discovered to be a fact, that for the last two years there had

been an utter suspension of all administration of law or justice in the province of Catamarca; that during that period there had been no sort of court sitting, civil or criminal; and, considering what I was informed of the tendencies and proclivities of Argentine judges, practitioners, and litigants, I think perhaps the provinces are just as well without their so-called seats of justice.

CHAPTER XIX.

Mountain Scenery.—Industries and "Openings" in Catamarca.

His Excellency's visit being ended, Don Adolfo kindly offered to cicerone me over the city, and introduce me to the abbot and other leading men of the place. I was much struck with the beautiful position of the city of Catamarca, situate in an amphitheatre, at the foot of numerous ranges of hills, one towering above the other, showing every beautiful variety of form and colour, from the rich tropical verdure of the Sierra de San Lorenzo to the snow-clad summit of the distant and lofty Aconquija, said to have an altitude of some 17,000 feet, and popularly believed in the locality to be the third highest mountain in the world.

Nothing I have ever seen in mountain scenery can compare with the soft, fantastic beauty, the picturesqueness, of these lovely hills, though bolder, wilder, grander mountain scenes I have viewed; for instance, the parent Andes, of which

these ranges are but spurs, the Himalayas, and other Indian ranges, and the great Australian chains. In Europe (in Austria), crossing from Gratz to Trieste, you have it bold and wild enough; or by the Splugen. Go from Milan to Geneva, and, *en passant*, gaze on chaste Mont Blanc. I remember when, years ago, I crossed from Florence to Rimini, I thought the rich beauties of the Apennines amply repaid one for all the scare of reported brigands. By the same token, I am happy to say we met none. And then, after all, the great charms of the Apennines appeared to me to be the lovely, downward views —the smiling valleys, the cities of the plains.

Lately coming home through Spain, I loitered about some of the gorges of the Pyrenees; really, with their fig and olive trees, their peaches, grapes, and more rarely oranges and limes, they do not convey so bad an idea of parts of my "El Dorado," Catamarca the beautiful! What a pity they changed its name, but *quien sabe* whether yet its former name of Nueva Inglaterra may not be the more appropriate, from its population and its industries?

My countrymen and their American cousins have made good their footing in the poorer southern provinces. They are ambitious, pushing, these pioneers: already they begin to fancy themselves "crowded" in the southern camps.

They have large ideas, these men: they buy their garden ground by square leagues, not by acres. Most surely the more enterprising will soon be pushing up to the northward of Cordoba, and once located there, they will never leave it. No frosts in these favoured regions to kill their lambs; no cruel Indians to drive away their cattle, or blanch their cheeks at the bare thought of wife or sister, or any child or female on their station; and richly will the first comers be rewarded.

In Catamarca lands far richer than those of many of the camps below are to be obtained for less than a quarter of the latter's price. Here you have a local market for your native wool, so that the very duties so ruinous to the exporting sheep farmer in the south, here become positively protective.

I say the native wool has a local market. It is for the making of ponchos. It is much coarser, stronger, and better for ponchos, and is much preferred, at any rate at Belem, where by far the best are made.

How far easier to farm the native long-haired sheep of the country, and avoid all the great risks of lambing and the rearing of an alien stock! Then for cattle, what finer fattening pastures than those wolds and ranges? What better market for your stock when fat than Chili? as also Bolivia to a limited extent!

Mule breeding for the last-mentioned State, and even the Republic itself, is most profitable, and most successful here. Wages are low, and all the luxuries of life may be produced upon the spot—coffee and sugar, olives, oils, spices, and the finest corn and wines, tobacco and maize; oranges, lemons, figs, plums, and all other fruits suitable for drying, and in which a large export trade, if only to the southern provinces, will yet be done. The peach forests clothe the lower ranges, and literally choke the gorges of the hills. The climate, semi-tropical below, as you mount the ranges, passes through every phase of temperature and productions, animal, vegetable, and mineral, until at last stopped by the region of eternal snows. Such is the actual state of things, and the prospects of the province of Catamarca, in this present year of grace, 1867.

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CHAPTER XX.

Public Buildings of Catamarca.—The Abbot.—The Siesta.

ALL Spanish and Spanish-American cities, towns, and even villages, appear to be laid out on the same plan. In the centre a large "plaza," or square, in which are the cathedral, the government house, courts of law, and public offices. The square is completed with a few residences and stores of the chief merchants and shopkeepers of the place. From this the principal streets run in accurate lines, until at length all plan or uniformity is lost in the maze of wretched ranchos and huts—the dwellings of the labouring classes, which always form the suburbs.

Catamarca is a city but of recent date, and the large and beautiful cathedral, erected (as far as the shell goes only) by Don Samuel, when governor of the province, some seven years ago, has never been continued or completed by his successors, but stands a silent witness against

their amount of energy and administration, as compared with his.

The same might be said of the fine government house, which, however, Don Samuel left more nearly completed, and though not nearly finished, it has ever since been occupied by succeeding governors—though as their public offices only, not as a habitation, there still being an absence of windows, and, I think, only one door complete. Most of the houses have small but beautiful little square gardens at the back, containing a vinery and orangery. Both the vines and orange-trees here attain a size I never saw equalled in other parts of the world. The fruits, too, are of the finest flavour, and, as I said before, most excellent wines are produced, though, with few exceptions, carelessly made and badly clarified.

The people very generally drink the wine new, the year after it is made—just as likely it is sick; in fact, with two or three exceptions, I never met with wine in Catamarca quite two years old.

Having returned the governor's visit, we called at the monastery to see the abbót, the principal church dignitary in the place, and a great friend of Don Adolfo's, whose life he had saved when struck down with low fever on a former visit. The church and monastery are anything but pretentious—a long, low range of one-storied

buildings, extensive enough, however, and with most beautiful gardens. The abbot was a kindly, gentlemanly old fellow. He and all his monks treated me with great kindness and attention, each morning of my stay sending me a present of rare and curious flowers. The abbot also lent me a fine Chilian horse and a real good mule, on which I was to make a tour through the mining district of the Capillitas Mountains, some 150 miles distant; indeed, I believe most of our party were mounted by the kind "fathers"—a great piece of luck for us, as they appeared to be the only owners of cattle in anything like decent condition.

From about half-past eleven A.M. until three P.M., the city of Catamarca sleeps. It might be a city of the dead; not a soul, not a living thing is seen during those hours. Never in any other part of the world have I seen the "siesta" so religiously observed. At half-past eleven a heavy meal is taken—"alumuerza," or breakfast; then Catamarca goes to bed. At half-past two they dress; then, cigarette in mouth, the men of business appear in their shops and offices again. I doubt, though, if much more than gossip goes on in the afternoon. What little office work is done, is from seven to ten in the morning. The evening, however, from eight until eleven, is the favourite time for shopping among the señoras,

and in any town in the interior of South America, after dark is the time to view the rank and fashion —the youth and beauty, cheapening, gossiping, and energetically discussing the most wonderfully gaudy of French and English goods.

In the evening, we went to a "tertullia" at Don Samuel's, when the señoritas played on the piano unusually well for amateurs; after which there was some dancing—polkas and quadrilles, at which I was much disappointed, as I had hoped to see some of the national dances—the fandango and "el gatto" (the cat), for instance. However, Don Adolfo consoled me by promising I should see all these things in the more northern districts, informing me it was not the fashion to dance anything but European dances in the cities. I made my excuses, and left the ball-room early, as we were to start for Las Capillitas next morning, and I had letters for Europe to write, and *quien sabe* when I might be again in the neighbourhood of a post-office!

CHAPTER XXI.

The Start for the Mines.—Don Saturnino.—Militiamen.—Montanaros.

FRESHENED and vigorous from the two or three days' rest, I was glad to be awakened early next morning by the strings of mules and saddle-horses. Carriage was allowed on a most liberal scale, each of the party being assigned a saddle-horse and mule, and a pack mule to carry his bed, bedding, portmanteaus, etc. A pack-mule load in South America is calculated to be 400 pounds, and for this reason you will generally find South American copper sent home in bars, or bricks, weighing about 200 pounds each.

Early as it was, troops of friends arrived to coffee, or maté, and to wish us "buon viaje," or "good journey," whilst several gentlemen accompanied us the first few leagues. Our road now lay over the mountains—a mere mule track, as, although there was a good road to the mines by Conception, Poman, etc., skirting the mountains,

we chose the route by Velasco and the Chilka Pass, as being shorter by some fifty miles, and we intended returning by the other road, so as to see more of the country.

At Catamarca, joined our party, Don Saturnino, a son of a well-known patriot in the War of Independence—an enthusiastic sportsman, born and reared in the province. Don Saturnino was well acquainted with the haunts of all the felinæ, and every description of game in these parts—a perfect "caballero," dangerous to the peace of mind of the señoras in the city; in the campo he beat the gouchos at their own craft and weapons, as well as in endurance.

Don Saturnino has an interest in the largest mercantile firm in the province, and for the last eight years revolution and disturbance have closed the various routes by which he obtained his supplies, so that he has spent the greater part of his time in exploring and discovering by which road his stores could be most safely conveyed.

Many were the exciting and interesting stories he had to tell us of the various extraordinary and roundabout journeys he had accomplished. Now to the westward to seek supplies from across the Cordilleras, to and from Chili or Peru; then to the northward, through Salta and Jujuy, to Bolivia; and on one occasion, when very hard pressed, he had travelled many hundred miles to

the eastward, opening up a new route down the Vermejo River even to Paraguay. He was the only man I ever met who, whilst at full gallop, could with his revolver make sure of an animal also going best speed; not tailoring or wounding his game, but bringing it down dead "lumpus."

Travelling along the passes of the lower ranges, our road was little more than the bed of a torrent. We crossed innumerable rivulets, the sources of many of those fine streams which render Catamarca and the neighbouring province of Tucuman the most fertile countries in the world. Nothing can be imagined more varied or more beautiful than the scenery. Now enveloped in a mass of tropical foliage; now a forest of peach-trees, which seemed to be blossoming, if not bearing fruit, all the year round. Then a small space would give us some sweet pastoral scene: a winding glistening stream; a lonely rancho, or hut; a woman and children, in ragged but brilliant-coloured ponchos, with perhaps a few sheep and cattle, all half scared at the unaccustomed sight of travellers;—such would give life and colour to the picture. *Apropos* of colour, in Catamarca is gathered much of the cochineal. The insects are found in large quantities in the great flat-leaved cactus, which bears the fruit known in England as the "prickly pear." The cacti grow in great variety and to extraordinary

size in this province; and on the barren hills, where are situate the copper mines, they have only a large round species of cactus wood for the roofing and "shorings" of the galleries and "adits" of the mines. In these hills flourishes the cotton-tree, the trunk of which grows in the most eccentric and fantastic shapes; sometimes bell-shaped, sometimes like an inverted cone; the stem seems to increase the farther from the root. It bears a large, green, pear-shaped fruit, almost as large as a cocoa-nut, inside of which is a quantity of soft and beautiful cotton. I believe, however, the fibre is too brittle to weave, and is only used for stuffing beds, pillows, etc. Two or three years ago Catamarca grew and exported a large quantity of cotton, very similar in quality to the famous "Sea Island," but, since prices have fallen, the cultivation has languished.

Night came upon us before we reached the village of Belasco, or Velasco, our halting-place, and therefore it was deemed prudent to put up at an estancia house on the outskirts, at the entrance of the township. Our party numbered some ten mounted men, and there was a picket of militia in occupation of the hamlet, who, in the dark, and between enthusiasm and funk, were just as likely as not to fire into us first and challenge us afterwards. We had a famous supper, and plenty of pure, wholesome wine of the locality. Then we

spread our beds in the verandah, and slept well in spite of the great difference of the temperature; it, of course, becoming much colder as we ascended the mountains, and attained a greater altitude. Next morning, when we turned out at daylight, in spite of my warm night-dress (a huge Iceland sealskin coat and cap), I felt bitterly cold. Not that the cold really was anything to compare with the frosty mornings of the camps to the southward of Cordoba, by Rosario, where we sometimes had more than ten degrees of frost; but I suppose one is so much more susceptible of cold when nearing the tropics. However, a biscuit and a cup of "coffee royal" made me contented enough; and away we started to face the gallant defenders of their country who held the village. In the inevitable "plaza" we found them, all round a newly-slain bullock, which some dozen of them had their knives into, skinning and cutting up the beast at the same time. They were dressed in scarlet flannel shirts, and nightcaps of the same hue. Gouchos, they were of course, all mounted men—"lanceros," each carrying a short, cumbersome lance, with a shabby red and white pennon fluttering at the point. Some had rusty sheathless sabres, and firearms of an antique and miscellaneous description; generally more dangerous, I should think, to the owners, or rather holders, than to the enemy. The men themselves were

fine, handy-looking fellows; and though their dress and present bloody occupation gave them a ferocious, savage appearance, I have no doubt that in their own ranchos they were decent and quiet gouchos enough. Their leader, or commandante, amused us very much. He was a little, fat, pompous man. When he observed our party he advanced to the road side in a defiant sort of way, rather curtly demanding who we were, and where we were bound. Most probably over night our arrival had been reported to him, and he knew quite as much of us and our objects as we were likely to inform him of; as, of course, had we come upon him at all unawares, it would have been his duty to order his men to have stood to their arms, to receive a somewhat formidable party of armed men, as we were. However, Don Adolfo handed him the pass Don Jesus, the governor, had given us, which puzzled the little man a good deal, as reading and writing had evidently not been included in his education. He was a smart little chap, though; for, keeping his eyes on the document, and "gammoning" to read it, by a series of artful questions he extracted the meaning of the writing, and at once expressed himself perfectly satisfied. His delight and civility were unbounded when Don Adolfo, further to propitiate him, insisted upon his acceptance of a bottle of Martell's cogniac, "primera classe,"

saying, "muy rico" (very rich), a general expression with Spaniards, and applied to express superiority in anything in creation, and out of it. The commandante wanted to give us an escort; it would even "delight him to escort us himself to the next post;" "the country was in an excited and disturbed state," etc., etc. We, however, declined anything of the sort with thanks; and when, at his request, we showed the little man the beautiful breech-loading revolvers we carried, throwing very nearly ounce conical balls, he admitted he thought we were pretty well able to take care of ourselves against any nomadic party of Montanaros or cut-throats we were likely to come across.

I may here mention that we did meet various bodies of armed men in our travels in these mountains, some of whom looked truculent enough, and some of which parties it was whispered to me were likely enough to be the dreaded Montanaros—who, by the way, I don't think are much worse than, or very different from, their political enemies, now in power. Neither side, however, molested us in any way. We always had a yarn and a cigarette with them, whoever they were; and even had any of them been evilly-disposed, a party of six or seven "patrons," armed with breech-loading rifles and revolvers, and as many picked gouchos, with their knives and boleadores,

would have been an uncommonly awkward party to have attacked.

At length the little commandante allowed us to take leave, and learning we had no beef, he ordered a fine "blanket piece" to be cut off the entire side of the animal just killed, weighing, perhaps, some twenty pounds. Esquimeralda seemed to think this a very delicate attention on the part of the grateful soldier. He immediately laid it between his saddle and saddle-cloths, and so rode upon it until breakfast time, when we all agreed it was wonderfully more tender than usual, doubtless owing to the fact that my peon was riding a somewhat tired mule, which required what is called a "merry heel" (lots of spurring) to keep him to the scratch. There were some five or six pounds of this beef unfinished after breakfast, which Esquimeralda stuck on a long pointed stick—the very stick, in fact, which had served as a spit. He stuffed this stick down his great boots; the end with the roast beef, or asado, on it came up nearly on a level with his nose. The grateful scent seemed to please him mightily during the whole day's march; and if ever I happened to look towards him, he was either cutting a piece of beef off, or hard at work masticating. The South Americans say "had Saint Anthony been a goucho, he never could have withstood the temptation of asado (roast beef)."

CHAPTER XXII.

Low price of Land in Catamarca.—The last stand of the Indians.—The Chilka Pass.

We now left the hills and forests, and our road lay across some beautiful undulating pastures. Owing, however, to the political animosities and persecutions before mentioned, there were but few stock or sheep to be seen. As an instance of the present low value of landed property in this province, I was this day offered nearly two leagues of fine grass land, with a fair stone cottage and offices, situated on the banks of a river, for £100 a league. To the southward of Cordoba they would certainly ask more than six times as much for such land. The grass, which was coarse, and only suitable at present for native sheep or cattle, was full of partridges, pigeons, hares, etc.; whilst the low, stony hills surrounding these wold-like lands abounded with the chinchilla, and a species of biscacho, small, and with fur of brilliant yellow and brown. We travelled about fifteen leagues this day

over the same description of country, and slept at a fine estancia house, the property of Don Samuel, to whom belonged most of the lands in the vicinity. The next morning, after about five leagues of the same undulating description of country, we had to cross a small range of stony mountains, which were unusually abrupt and precipitous. I have said stony, but really, from the extraordinary quantity of mica, and other metalliferous indications, I might almost call them mountains of ore. The whole face of the mountains glistened in the sun like one mass of gold. Small quantities of gold *have* been taken from these localities; and, indeed, I should think the range must be one gold mine, judging from the innumerable indications lying broadcast over the whole place.

This locality, called El Puccara, is also interesting as being the place where the northern Indians made their last stand against the brave Adelantades—those gallant conquistadores, those god-like Spaniards; what deeds of modern warfare can be compared with theirs! Usually many hundred miles from any basis of operations, in an unexplored country, almost dependent on the chances of the chase for supplies, burning their ships when they landed, how nobly they carried out their pledges to conquer or to die! Ah, how have the mighty fallen! How those brave men would weep to see the wrangling braggarts the

majority of their descendants have become. The forts, or rather breastworks, behind which the Indians made their last defence, still stand as left upon that, to them, fatal day.

According to present notions of warfare, and the present style of arms, nothing could be worse chosen than the precipitous hills, commanded on all sides by higher ones, on which the Indians took their stand. Their walls, hastily prepared, were mere breastworks; but in those days, against the Spaniards' weapons, without artillery, such a lair might well be thought impregnable. Plenty of food was stored; an ever-running stream flowed at their base, completely covered and protected by the Indians' strongest works. Yet the want of water proved their ruin; for the Spaniards turned the course of the rivulet, and the Indians, weakened and maddened by thirst, made a feeble sally, seeking an easier death at the hands of the Spanish swordsmen. One Indian family of those tribes alone remains, and feed their scanty flocks of goats upon this very hill, the scene of the ruin of their fathers. One very dirty, but rather pretty, black-eyed Indian, of some ten years of age, was all we saw. She was introduced to me as the only child of her parents, and the last of her race. I did not see the parents, who were out "tracking," searching for a lost mule. After all, this Indian family appeared in need of no parti-

cular commiseration. They had their flock of goats, the flesh of which kept them in meat, and the skins they bartered for tobacco and spirits—their idea of luxuries. For clothes, they care for none further than a poncho or two, which they spin and weave themselves from the hair of their goats. A fine peach forest grew in the valley at their very door; and nothing but their irradicable laziness prevented them enjoying all the decencies, and even most of the comforts, of civilized life. How far worse off are many—I fear I might say most—of our own peasantry, willing, as they generally are, and able, to work. In no other part of the world, well governed or ill governed, have I seen the same pinching want, the terrible squalid misery, one sees and hears of so often in highly-civilized England.

After crossing these short metallic ranges, we journeyed over more table-land, watered with frequent streams, and intersected with many belts of timber, until we approached another range of much higher hills, the Ambato, in which was a very difficult pass called the Chilka, which would save us many miles of our road to the town of Fuerte del Andalgala, at the foot of the Capillitas, and where we had hoped to sleep that night. Darkness, however, overtook us in the Chilka Pass, and we spent the evening most unpleasantly. In the gloaming our guide had been doubtful and

confused, and as night came on the man fairly confessed he had lost his way in this most unpleasant labyrinth of beds of torrents and precipices. It became pitch dark, and there was nothing for it but to leave it to the mules. But the poor brutes were tired out, and completely strange to this part of the country; however, they were cautious and sure-footed enough, and, fortunately, none of the party came to grief. From the motion of the mules, it would appear we were all the time staggering up and down high stone stairs. This cheerful amusement went on for some three or four hours, the party stopping at intervals to take a "sensation," * a cigarette, and a grumble. Between one and two, however, a brilliant moon rose, and by great good fortune we hit upon the right track, which brought us to a rancho, when we cast loose our poor animals—to rest only, for there was not a blade of grass in this inhospitable region; then throwing ourselves down in our "tracks," we lay like logs until the sun was high, thoroughly tired out, having been in the saddle some eighteen hours.

* A "drink:" probably aqua diente.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Fuerte del Andalgala.—A Catamarcanian Señora's Reception.

A COUPLE of hours' ride through the most beautiful wild orange-grove, brought us to the vineyards skirting the thriving and increasing town of Fuerte del Andalgala, situate in the north-east corner of the great basin formed by the three ranges of Ambato, Aconquija, and Famatina. It is well watered by a never-failing stream, taking its rise from various springs in the lofty Anconquija, and further swelled by the unceasing melting of eternal snows. This department is the very garden of Catamarca—itself, the garden of South America. The whole mountain country round is highly mineral, auriferous, argentiferous, and cupriferous; and though, with the exception of the copper-mines of Señors Molinos, Caranza, and Lafone, mining is but carried on in a most slovenly and desultory manner, still, sufficient copper and gold are pro-

duced to keep the population thriving, if not wealthy.

Wine growing, the cultivation of maize and tobacco, sugar and coffee, indigo and rice, the drying of fruits, fattening of cattle, and tanning of hides and goat-skins, are the staple industries of the population in the vicinity of the town. Forests of Sebil, the bark of which is the best in the world for tanning, clothe the hill sides here, as in the neighbouring province of Tucuman, where, however, the tanning business is carried on to a much greater extent than in Catamarca, as it is from these rich valleys the fat cattle are prepared and supplied for the Chilian markets. Great herds are driven across the Cordilleras to Chili every year between the months of November and May, when the passes are free from snow.

This outlet, of course, keeps up the price of cattle, and prevents their being slaughtered for their mere hides and grease, as they are in most of the other provinces of the Republic.

In Fuerte del Andalgala we were most hospitably entertained by the lovely Señora Clementina, the wife of Don Wellington Mercado, the principal merchant of the place, a correspondent of Don Adolfo's, who was then absent visiting some mines. Agreeably to the custom of the country, we were first received in the señora's

spacious and beautifully-furnished bedroom, which in these most northern provinces seems to fulfil the purposes of a drawing-room, the only public room being a fine *salle á manger*. But in truth, except that there was a highly-ornamented French bedstead of bronze and gold, and lace and tapestry, it might have been a Parisian *salon* that we entered. Nothing could be more charming and natural than the manners and amiability of this beautiful and unsophisticated young matron, and, indeed, of the ladies generally in the upper or northern provinces. In my opinion, as a class, they are far superior to their sisters in the south, who have become very Frenchified and affected in their tone and manners.

A huge wine-vat filled with hot water gave me a most delicious bath, which, I fear, taxed the energies and resources of my kind hostess to the utmost, for I suppose that so much hot water at the same time had never been required or produced in the department before. For two or three days we revelled in all the luxuries and refinements of civilization. Several foreigners, Germans and Italians, have married ladies of the country, and settled in this lovely Eden, and nothing could exceed the kindness and attention I received from them.

All declared how glad they should be to welcome English settlers in the province, many

of them stating their conviction that an English element in the population would have an enormous civilizing effect, as well as being an extra and powerful guarantee for the preservation of peace and prosperity in the province.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Our Escort.—Mid-day Dreams.

We had a short day's ride to the foot of the Capillitas, one of the loveliest of valleys, richly timbered with olives and oranges, peaches and fig-trees. Innumerable streams irrigated this series of gardens. The few spaces on the surface of the earth not covered by vineyards in espaliers, were filled with tobacco and maize, coffee, sugar, and patches of lucerne. The silver poplar and gigantic ever-blooming blood-red rose-bushes, marked out the limits of the various proprietaries. Much excellent wine is made in these parts. I was particularly struck with some of the sherries, and a peculiarly delicate muscatel; but, as usual, all the wine was new, and in execrable condition. It is generally consumed in the locality. The old Italian fashion is followed here: that is, the growers (no matter how large a proprietor, how grand a signeur), vend their wine, and that by retail, from their own dwellings. About sixpence a quart is the average price for

what,' properly cleared and aged, in England would fetch as many shillings.

The brandy, or "aqua diente," though made from grapes, is harsh, strong, and fiery. Vast quantities are exported to Bolivia. It is very generally flavoured with aniseed, a kind of juniper, or some other kind of seed, berry, or herb, not generally considered palatable by Europeans. In Buenos Ayres, Santa Fé, and the other southern provinces of the republic, vast quantities of "cania" (a sort of rum, made from the sugar-cane) are consumed, to the great detriment of the health and morals of the population, native and foreign.

Don Adolfo is the Buenos Ayres agent for all the principal merchants and gentry of these provinces, and is, therefore, naturally on friendly and intimate terms with them. Great, then, was our satisfaction when some eight or ten of them expressed their intention of accompanying us in our tour through the mountains, and our inspection of the mines. They made a most gallant escort, and were most jovial companions. Many of them were quite elderly, calm and dignified, but altogether unassuming. Few of them but had some extraordinary history.

Don P—— was the celebrated Lancer officer, the hero of so many wonderful adventures during General Rosa's eventful career. Don C——, the

Federal general, who, with a mere handful of gouchos and Indians, had crossed and re-crossed the Cordilleras in the face of the enemy, and almost ere the snow had left the passes, saving his party, and, indeed, his country, by a timely supply of ammunition concealed in bundles of fagots; he and his men disguised as humble "arieros," or muleteers. All of them with strong political proclivities, many of them with powerful and unscrupulous political enemies, I may not repeat the "stories of their lives," always so modestly, so frankly spoken; never told for mere gossip's sake, or braggadocio, but always for my guidance, instruction, or amusement. And then the names and gallant bearing of these old hidalgos, a mere handful of men after all—these "grand señors," these powerful "patrons," owners of vast tracts, in fact, of nearly all the soil, and wielding a kindly, patriarchal sort of sway over the half-breed and goucho population. The lineal descendants, generally bearing the identical names of their brave ancestors, the gallant comrades of Cortez, Pizarro, Vasca da Gama, Soto Mayo, Louzada, Guittierez, Garay, and Cabral. Dressed in their huge thigh boots, great massive silver spurs, fantastic cloaks or ponchos, with faces burnt and bearded; a large and gaudy-coloured silk handkerchief loosely tied round the head, with hanging ends under the high conical-shaped sombrero. The "recow," or

saddle, high and demipiqued with massive silver mountings, and covered with skins of wild animals —the panther, the puma, and the "sloth" skin from Bolivia; the last, for such a purpose more highly esteemed than all, it being said to be much cooler than any other skin.

They were all heavily armed with huge knives or daggers, and pistols of a cumbrous and antique fashion. As we slowly rode Indian file along some wondrous mountain pass, filled with something like awe, as well as admiration, for the wild and noble scenery, I sometimes seemed to lose my own identity. My companions at noontime, probably missing the accustomed siesta, were grave, solemn, and taciturn; the only sound, the occasional half whistle, half scream, of the gigantic condors, the eagles of the Argentine Alps; or, if passing some unusually narrow and dangerous ledge, the deep, sonorous voice of our goucho leader would exclaim, "Cuidou, señores, cuidou!" ("Take care, sirs, take care!"). I declare sometimes I half believed I was living in the days of Raleigh, or dear "Franky Drake," or that I was a humble follower of my life's hero, the great Sir Amyas Leigh; in extenuation of my absentness, my romantic dreaminess, I would remind my readers that since those days—at any rate, as we are taught they were—so are they now; in this place nothing yet seems changed.

CHAPTER XXV.

Donna Manuellita.—Don Samuel the Younger.—Pilçiao.

We halted for the night at the estancia house of Donna Manuellita, a jolly and well-known old widow lady, the owner of a tract of land lying at the foot of the Belem range. On the summit of the first low hill is situate her dwelling. The hospitable old señora did not seem at all put out at the arrival of so many hungry guests. She gaily informed us that she must intuitively have known of our coming and our appetites, for that she had that very morning killed an "animale" (a bullock), which would provide us with plenty of "asado." Her cellars were well stored with a peculiar red, thick, sweet, rich wine, for the production of which she had a *specialité*, and which, to me, accustomed to the drier wines in use in England, was specially and terribly nasty. We had brought hares and partridges we had killed on the plains below. Moreover, our "carga" mules were well

packed with luxuries, so there would be no lack of good cheer.

While discussing the maté and coffee universally tendered on entering a Catamarcanian household, a loud cheer announced another arrival, and that a popular one, when, to my great delight, in walked one whom I am always proud to maintain and insist is an Englishman. He, like my old friend, rejoices in the name of Don Samuel. To prevent confusion, I will call him the "younger." Born and educated, as far as school goes, in Monte Video, the son of an English gentleman who married a native lady, Señor Don Samuel "the younger," as a youth, was sent to England, where he graduated, and took honours at Cambridge.

To his energy and activity is first owing whatever prosperity and development these distant mountainous districts enjoy. For the last eight years he has been in charge of the immense family property in Catamarca, comprising, as well as vast tracts of forest and pasture lands, one of the most productive copper mines in the world, and a most complete and extensive range of smelting works, the seven or eight furnaces constantly at work turning out some sixty or seventy tons of copper a month, employing between five and six hundred hands, and teaching the youth many useful trades and handicrafts of Europe—

blacksmiths, carpenters, masons, bricklayers, brick-makers, etc., etc.

Pilçiao (the smelting works) is situate in a great forest, at the foot of the Ambato Mountains, miles away from anything like European civilization or industry. It has, indeed, a most strange and surprising effect, the suddenly emerging from the primitive forests upon these extensive and interesting works. From the noisy yet systematic bustle, and the order and industry displayed, I could believe I was suddenly transported back to some part of the "black country," or in Birmingham or Liege.

Never shall I forget that visit. The night had set in when we arrived; but the furnaces were flaming and roaring; the carpenters' and blacksmiths' shops were in full activity; provisions were being served out; a tropilla of mules with copper ore from the mines had just arrived, and were being unladen; women and children, fetching and carrying water from the one large well of the establishment;—everything betokened cheerful and active industry. The huge, flat-roofed, deeply-verandahed, comfortable-looking house was so placed that from it could be observed all the different workshops, etc. In the verandah, eager to welcome the "patron" and his guests, stood several gentlemen, the superintendent and chemist (Germans), and several Italian, Spanish,

and Argentines, all in responsible positions about the works.

Truly this is a serious digression; but not without a purpose. I wish to impress upon my young reader, perhaps a possible emigrant, that despite the revolutions, anarchy, and disturbance that have been raging in these provinces for the last seven or eight years, still Don Samuel "the younger," a foreigner to all intents and purposes, at any rate, in the eyes of the Argentines, has been enabled to carry on this enormous business, in which a capital of some £200,000 is invested; he himself assured me, without one single instance of hindrance, interference, or annoyance of any sort.

But let us return to Donna Manuellita's, where, having supped, we were a very jolly party, reclining on our beds, stretched on the floor. (I don't think I before mentioned that a luggage-mule's load should have a hide stretched over it; it preserves one's bed and luggage from the sun, dust, or possible rain, and, laid on the ground under one's bedding, prevents any damp or cold being drawn from the earth by the warmth of our body.) Smoking our cigarettes, the tobacco wrapped in "chala" (maize leaf), which is preferred to paper in these parts, yarning, and exchanging "noticias," or news, we gradually dropped off to sleep.

Before grey dawn, my faithful henchman roused me with his invariable demand of "Oh! Don Enrique, query U caffe?" ("Do you wish coffee?") which, of course, I always did, it being specially grateful on the fresh frosty mornings we always had in these altitudes.

Long before sunrise our beds were packed, and the "carga" mules well on the road. We soon overtook them, however, as we took advantage of every level to gallop along and "circulate our juices," somewhat stagnant in the keen frosty morning air. We crossed many rivulets, bristling with icicles, and in every shady nook the damp was frozen, making quick travelling rather dangerous. However, we had a long and difficult journey before us.

Until we reached the mines, there was no shelter to be had, and it was out of the question camping out, with thirteen or fourteen degrees of frost; so pushing on manfully, we crossed the ranges, and after passing some table-land, the most beautiful cattle pasture in the world, arrived at the foot of the Capillitas.

These mountains are stony and barren, but teeming with minerals. After some painful climbing up the steep and rocky track, our poor tired animals at last brought us safely to the dwellings of the workers in the great copper mine Rosario, the property of my friend, Don

Samuel "the elder," and Don Adolfo. Here we were duly expected, and the hearty welcome, well-warmed rooms, capital dinner, and wines, soon made us forget—what that day had proved —a tedious, difficult, and most fatiguing journey.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The Rosario Mine.—Law of Mines in the Argentine Republic.

ALTHOUGH the copper mines Rosario and Restaraudor are, perhaps, two of the richest and most valuable in the world, whether from the extent of the lodes, or the richness of the ores, I do not propose to trouble my reader with any very lengthy or particular description of my visit, or the highly cupriferous, auriferous, and argentiferous character of the sierras in these parts. For details of such matter I would rather refer them to the writing of an expert in such matters; for instance, to Major Rickard's book.* That gentleman shortly, pleasantly, and comprehensively relates all that is generally necessary of the mines and the mineral wealth of the country. I content myself with stating, on his authority, that

* "A Mining Journey across the Great Andes," by Major F. Ignacio Rickards, F.R.G.S., late Inspector-General of Mines to the Argentine Republic.

throughout the states of the Argentine Republic "any person above the age of twenty-five years, irrespective of nation, religion, occupation, or calling, is eligible to acquire and possess mining property, no matter upon whose land the mine may be situate." Old mine or new mine, so long as no one is working it, the discoverer is entitled to it, and all benefits from it, by "simply denouncing the same before the notary public of the district, and presenting a stamped document, value two shillings and threepence, describing the position, boundaries, and class of ore, etc." There are no royalties or license fees to pay, save a tax to the Argentine government of four pounds a year for each mine. The following important paragraph must not be lost sight of:—"But, in order to maintain possession, a person must be employed constantly working in the mine, or, at least, must work in it at certain times within every three months. For, if it be left for that period without workmen, it becomes "denounceable," and consequently the property of the first person who claims it; you losing for ever all right to reclaim, even by purchase."

All the above seems reasonable enough; and surely, if a mine is worth keeping at all, it is worth keeping a man always on it; especially when we remember that some two pounds a month is the highest wage for experienced pitmen.

Now I believe the greatest prizes of all for the bold adventurer in the Argentine Republic will prove to be in the undeveloped mineral wealth of the country. At a merely nominal expense, parties of young Englishmen, of from five to fifteen in number, could ride about these sierras prospecting in perfect security, at the same time obtaining a knowledge of the country and language, and enjoying the finest sport and the most beautiful scenery in the world. Of course it is desirable that, at any rate, one of the party should possess some sort of elementary knowledge of mining matters, and the various signs that are indications of the existence of mineral wealth below. But such superficial and theoretical knowledge, if it is essential, is very easily acquired from books; and it is surprising how soon the mere living amongst mines and miners teaches us all that is practically necessary for extracting the riches from our ever willing and generous mother earth. Besides, every party should engage at least a couple of peons, to act as guides, cooks, to track and lasso the horses and mules, and to teach the whereabouts and habits of the various descriptions of game. The peons you would naturally hire in the province, and all Catamarcanians are born miners; so that you would have "professors" at your hands, practical and inexpensive.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Inspection of Copper Mines.—English Miners in the Capillitas.

We thoroughly inspected the Rosario mine, which we found even richer and more extensive than represented to us by its German captain. The formation is primary in these parts, and the ores generally in the form of grey and yellow sulphides of extraordinary richness; the ores of Rosario averaging 25 per cent. of copper, and some 6 or 7 per cent. of gold. Some ores were shown to us of 75 per cent. of copper, but these were exceptional. Owing to the auriferous contents of the copper, the agent in London informed me he was obtaining ten pounds per ton more for it than the market price of South American copper.

It was fatiguing and somewhat ticklish work descending the various shafts, some of them sixty to seventy feet deep, a good deal of which we had to climb by means of notched poles instead of ladders. Now, though this style of climbing

seems very good fun to the bears in the pit at the Zoological Gardens, I did not like it a bit, especially as the poles in the mines are very generally slimy and slippery from damp; to say nothing of the comrade next you being excited or nervous, and, if following you, jamming your fingers with his foot, or, if preceding, setting fire to the stern of your trousers with the candle he has stuck in his hat, mining fashion. This actually happened to one of our party, a very stout man; and when I heard his somewhat angry expostulation, and the cause of it, I was so overcome with laughter that I nearly slipped off the pole, which had I done I should infallibly have broken my neck.

We also visited Señor L——'s mine, El Restaraudor, sunk in the next hill, and whose boundaries almost join those of El Rosario. The ores, of course, are of a very similar character, though Señor L——'s copper is said to contain a higher per-centage of gold. By the way, I have discovered I had been wrongly informed as to there being no Englishmen in the province; for here, in these lonely mountains, far away from any civilization, daily and nightly, deep in the bowels of the earth, work the superintendent of Señor L——'s mine, Captain T——, and six Cornishmen, foremen miners. Since Captain T—— and his countrymen had arrived (I think by way of Chili), some three years back, they had never

been five miles from the mines. They were engaged for four years, when they would return to England, or be re-engaged for another term if they wished. I could not restrain my surprise that they were so contented and cheerful. Poor fellows! as they said, "working day and night by turns, they had no time to be home sick." Of course, they are very highly paid, and have first rate rations of beef, bread, wine, and fruit; and then I remembered that a working miner's life, generally underground, must be pretty well the same in whatever country he may be living.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Return to Fuerte del Andalgala.—Pilçiao.—El Gatto.

NOTWITHSTANDING the extreme cold, we spent some very pleasant days on Las Capillitas, making excursions for sporting, for wonderful scenery, for prospecting, and visiting unopened mines, etc. We also made excursions into the neighbouring province of Tucuman, crossing the base of the lofty Aconquija, said, I don't know how truly, to be the third highest mountain in the world. Then we crossed the Atajo range to the eastward, shooting here the great condor, and other game, and visiting the gold-fields of the Rio Santa Maria. Here I saw some beautiful specimens of gold nuggets, weighing from one to three ounces, and studded with garnets. I regretted very much I had not time to have one more turn at gold digging; as it was, we merely visited two or three of the placers.

As Don Adolfo had now finished his business at the mines, we lost no time in turning our backs

upon the bleak ranges of Las Capillitas and the Atajo ranges; hastening to the more enjoyable climate of the fine valley dividing us from the first or lower ranges of the Cordilleras, marked on Stanford's maps as the Gulampaja. Nothing can exceed the beauty and fertility of this enormous valley, at present hardly occupied at all, though eminently adapted for breeding and fattening cattle, and in the summer months not above five or six days from a market, as, once across the Chilian frontier, they are eagerly purchased at a remunerative price. Great tracts of these lands belonged to various members of our party, who all expressed intense desire that English settlers would come among them; declaring they would lend, hire, or sell them good lands on far easier terms than the most worthless in the southern camps could be obtained for. Señor L—— assured me he himself had lately purchased a large tract in this neighbourhood for considerably less than one hundred dollars a square league, on which he bred and fattened large herds of cattle, many of which daily had to be killed for rations for his two large establishments at the mines and the smelting works.

Shooting as we travelled, many large hares, partridges, plover, and yellow biscacho were bagged. We crossed the small range called Belem, and returning through the township of

Fuerte del Andalgala, we again enjoyed a night's hospitality of Don Wellington's, and the piquant society of his charming young Donna. Next morning we visited the extensive tanneries of Don Carlos Werner, a German engineer, who has married an Argentine lady, and settled in this beautiful province.

Don Carlos is supposed to prepare the most and best kid skins in South America, thanks to the bark of the sebil tree, vast forests of which grow on these ranges and in Tucuman. Don Carlos is a capital fellow, speaks French, English, German, and Spanish indifferently. He is a good sportsman, riding and shooting admirably; and the traveller's friend, regularly keeping open house for strangers, of whatever nationality, to whom his advice is most valuable, Don Carlos having so large an experience of the country. Resuming our journey in the afternoon, we reached Pilçiao, Señor L——'s smelting works, that evening, a description of which was somewhat prematurely given in a former chapter.

It was evident we were expected at Pilçiao, and that festivities were the order of the day. A dozen ladies, and some thirty caballeros, were strolling in the verandahs, and greeted our arrival with lively salutations. Except myself, all present were on intimate terms; still, no one could be more gracious than the señoras, or more courteous

than were the caballeros to me. Evidently, a "roving Englishman" has not often been seen in these parts, and much good-natured curiosity was displayed as to my reasons for visiting their somewhat out-of-the-way part of the world.

We had ridden fast, and through a good deal of sand, and were as dusty as though we had just come home by road from the Derby. Señor L—— and I indulged immediately in a "tub." I did not hear that any of the rest of the party did. It must be admitted that the very highest class of South Americans don't seem to care about tubbing, whilst I was credibly informed that, as a rule, the goucho is not washed from his birth to his burial. Another strange habit the Argentines have, in common with the Spaniards, is to put on two or three shirts when starting upon a journey. There is a wonderful quantity of warmth in an extra shirt or two; and then, of course, the economy of labour is great, as, when arrived at their journey's end, instead of all the trouble of stripping, bathing, etc., they simply "peel," take off the outer shirt, and then they are neat and clean, and ready for anything—so they say, at least.

Dinner was soon announced, and we entered a grand and lofty room, with its open roof of massive timbers. It might have been an old baronial hall; long tables were laid out for some fifty

guests; the appointments; in English fashion, all most imposing and complete. It was quite pleasant once more to see snowy linen, bright glass and brilliant plate, a salon well lighted, and the tables adorned with flowers.

We had a sumptuous dinner, including all the standard Spanish dishes—caldo, asado, and those wonderful mixtures, "olla podrida," which always appear to me to be the result of temporary lunacy on the part of the cook, comprising, as that favourite dish does, all the several courses mixed up together—fish and fruits, beef, figs, mutton, grapes, eggs, preserves, and game, etc. etc. The dinner concluded with any amount of "dolces" (sweets), and every conceivable delicacy in the way of "coffin meat," *i. e.*, lobsters, oysters, sardines, and haddocks, etc., preserved in tins.

There were many capital wines—sherries, claret, ports, and muscatel; old, pure, and in good condition, all made in the locality, from Señor L——'s own vineyards. It was my good fortune to sit next a charming native lady, the wife of a German gentleman. Most of the German and Italian settlers have married native wives. Opposite to me was a brilliant young brunette, unmarried, sparkling, tall and graceful, and utterly unsophisticated. With all the boldness of innocence she returned my frequent glances, evidently highly pleased by the unconcealed admiration

evinced by the caballero Inglese.* Still, though I could jabber broken Spanish sufficiently to obtain all I wanted, whether of information or otherwise, I was hardly up to that delicate *finesse* of the language so desirable for a mild flirtation. However, Catamarca is a free country, and there are numerous institutions and customs that help one along. For instance, if you discover on your plate a specially fine piece of fowl's liver, or a particularly succulent piece of pork, from the "olla," it is considered very good taste, very gallant, to stick the rich morsel on your fork, and hand or send it to the fair lady you admire, take her fork to yourself, and look languishing The same system of exchange is carried on with your wine-glasses. On this occasion, one of the guests, a gallant commandante, soldier-like, as well as, like myself, a great admirer of the fair sex, was so very handy with his fork, not to mention his wine-glass, that he got very nearly "mops and brooms" before the pudding came.

Not only after, but during dinner, toasts and somewhat long-winded speeches are *de rigeur* in

* To prevent misunderstanding, I will here inform my young readers that, not wishing to mislead, I had "shown my colours," had "hoisted the nuptial ensign," before joining my party. Had I been sailing under a "free flag," *quien sabe* where I might be settled now? There are others besides our old friend Mickey Free, who believe "they'd make illegant Turks, being fond of tobacco and ladies."

Catamarca. Everybody toasted everybody, separately and collectively, themselves and their families, their countries, creeds, and governments. Señor L—— is essentially the discreet foreigner, the cosmopolitan. He professes to care nothing about politics or parties; friendly with all the country side, men of every denomination meet at his table. These men were fiery and impulsive in disposition, many of them with strong political differences and personal hatreds, all full of wine, and yet an unvaried studied courtesy and careful abstinence from offensive speech marked our merry meeting. At length, after some three hours' symposium, the señoras grew impatient. We had long heard some fitful sounds of voices and guitars, but now they all burst forth with one great crash of melody. Thoroughly understanding the signal, with one accord the company rose, and rushed to the ball-room. Señor L—— and a German gentleman, finished musicians both, went to the piano, a violin and the guitars joined, and a chorus of some half a dozen sweet tenor, and as many deep rich bass voices, made up a band complete indeed. Polkas and waltzes, fandangos, and prime favourite of all, the national El Gatto, followed in quick succession. How shall I describe "El Gatto" (The Cat), its delicious *abandon*, its grace, its fire, its ease!

There is a crowded ball-room, where all love

dancing. The company sitting round the room are resting, smoking, fanning, flirting. Suddenly a voice loudly proclaims, "El Gatto, El Gatto; La Señora ——! La Señora ——!" All present testify their approval by clapping their hands and loudly echoing the name of the señora called upon. A tall graceful girl responding, calmly rises from her seat, full of dignity and self-possession. She slowly cruises round the room, scanning the company as though to pick her partner. Having chosen (*quien sabe* whether her choice is influenced by love, or hate, or jealousy), she flirts the rich lace handkerchief she carries in his face; she takes her position in the centre of the floor, followed by her caballero, handkerchief in hand, and dignified too, but at first pretending to be almost abject in his deep humility.

The music commences; guitars and impassioned voices—to no other strains could "El Gatto" be danced. Lowly and softly it begins, almost oriental in its plaintive wailings. For a minute or two, fixed, immovable, stand the pair of dancers. Almost imperceptibly the music has increased in vehemence. The dancers are in motion, gracefully bending and lowly bowing; always waving their handkerchiefs; the lady softly advancing, the señor as quietly retreating. Coyly she retires, eagerly he follows. "Active, agile as she is, the brave caballero is close upon

her." "Surely he will clasp her to his arms." So, or something similarly, runs the refrain of the air they sing. Keenly sympathizing with every soft and springy undulation, every voluptuous movement and graceful attitude of the dancers, the "band" extemporize as they proceed.

All the while, the audience know *he* may not touch her. "Hands off," is the first and arbitrary rule of the dance. With arms extended, seemingly in the very act of grasping his fair prize, of a sudden the voices pause, the music ceases; gracefully she pirouettes, and with a queenly gesture faces her too presumptuous admirer. According to the beauty or their appreciation of this "pose" thunder the vivas, the applause of the company. I said before, "Quien sabe?" Who knows whether love or jealousy induced her choice of partners? "Caramba!" I'd like to lay a "monkey" on the matter now. Mark the sweet, smiling, half-open, pouting lips; the almost hidden glances of the eyes, so tenderly beseeching, so deprecatory of all anger for the soft repulse; behold the present attitude, for one brief moment more than coquettish, almost dignified, but now so yielding. Again they raise their voices; softly the instruments are once more touched; once more the dancers are gliding, bounding, springing, increasing in cat-like pantomime, and pace, and energy; until at last, exhausted, they throw them-

selves into one more graceful, sympathetic "pose," and all is over. Thundering applause, fresh cigarettes, nips of cogniac, excited criticism, and then another lady "takes the floor."

I have said, it may not be for love alone a lady chooses her partner. Truly polite, and therefore always willing to oblige, a señora never dreams of hesitating when the company call upon her to dance. Should there happen to be a trifle of jealousy between the partners, I cannot express the amount of anger and scorn that can be most gracefully and politely demonstrated by the fair danseuse—the proud contempt and supreme indifference of the brave caballero.

As keenly in their hatreds as in their loves do the audience sympathize; and the "Tertullias" of the lower orders often end with ponchos being wrapped around the arm, knives drawn, and, in place of music, a finale of stabs, shrieks, and imprecations.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Pipanaco.—My Peon's horse "above himself."—Perplexing situation.

THE next morning, having been shown over the extensive and interesting works, Señor L—— and most of the party accompanied us across the forests and a small desert, or "salina," to Pipanaco, the smelting-works of my friends, Dons Samuel and Adolfo. We were a most imposing cavalcade—between thirty and forty mounted ladies and gentlemen, with quite a train of "carga" mules. Some of the ladies rode *à l'Amazone*—that is, in side-saddles, like European equestrians; but by far the majority of the señoras rode *en pillion*, behind their fathers, husbands, or brothers.

I fancy such a thing as a carriage has never been seen north of Catamarca City, though, once past the ranges, there are plenty of fair natural roads.

We spent a few days very pleasantly at Pipa-

naco, riding and shooting by day, and feasting, singing, and dancing by night. The smelting-works themselves are precisely similar in character and purpose to those of Pilçiao, but they are not carried on so extensively or so systematically as at that place. We then bid farewell to all our good companions from the Fort, and commenced our return to Catamarca, but by a different route, making a considerable circuit in the magnificent valley that stretches right across to the Andes, that we might enjoy some shooting in the lower ranges of the Sierras Gulampaja and Farmatina, celebrated as the best puma ground in the country.

In one of the ranges above the town of Londres, one of these noble animals very nearly finished off my faithful henchman, Esquimeralda. We had enjoyed a long and successful day after the guanacco, and were quietly riding down to the plains, where our companions were awaiting us. We were passing over a good broad track that ran along the side of the mountain. On the other side a precipice, occasionally more or less precipitous, descending some 1200 to 1500 feet down to the rocky bed of a torrent. Here and there a deep rent, or chasm, extended from the very top of the hill, crossing the road, to its base, occasionally requiring careful riding.

However, just now I was going leisurely

along, thinking what bad luck I had to find no puma, and how I should enjoy my dinner when I reached the camp, for I had eaten nothing since very early in the morning—some nine or ten hours before; when suddenly I heard behind me a loud "caramba!" followed by a peal of laughter. Sharply turning and looking behind and above me, I was just in time to see my peon's saddle slipping round to his horse's belly, and he with it, shouting with laughter, the horse kicking and plunging violently. As ill luck would have it, all this happened as he was crossing one of those very chasms above referred to, and at this spot the precipice was sheer, until there was a ledge some sixteen or seventeen feet from the road. The peon, who for a moment was head downwards, freed himself from the horse, and, clinging to his bridle, turned a sort of half somersault, and was safely on his feet on the ledge, perhaps two or three feet broad. The moment the horse felt himself free, away he came full gallop past me down the hill. I made a futile effort to grasp his bridle as he passed; but the brute was "stampedoed," and went head down, and my horse and I had a very narrow escape of being pushed off the road as he passed. Then I retraced my steps until I came above Master Esquimeralda, who was grinning like a "Chesshire cat," and seemed to think the whole affair

great fun. I, on the contrary, thought it a great bore, and was considering how the deuce he was going to return to the road, for though only so few feet below the road, the side of the hill to it was as sheer as a house, whilst beneath him was a descent of some 1500 feet, which, though not quite so steep, was quite impracticable with any chance of safety; and even in the event of his safely reaching the torrent at the bottom by some extraordinary accident, *quien sabe* where all its tortuous winding went to? Slap through the Cordilleras to Chili, for all we know. I certainly was perplexed, whilst the coolness, the apparent indifference of Esquimeralda, irritated me beyond measure. The beggar had seated himself, with his legs hanging over the ledge, and, of course, made a cigarette; then, pulling out his tinder-box, struck a light, and began to smoke. I suppose his coolness was catching, for hoppling my horse with the maneadores, I sat down in the road, lit my cigarette, and, gazing at my "Man Friday," tried to realize the situation. Manifestly before I could stir I must get him up. Yes, but how? I carried no lasso; his horse had bolted with his. There were no trees, or anything to make fast to, and at length I came to the conclusion I must extemporize a rope of some description, fasten it to my horse (fortunately a quiet beast), and drag my friend up.

I removed my rifle sling, which gave me some four feet; to this I joined my revolver-belt, nearly three feet more. One of the girths of my saddle, the longe surcingle, and three or four large silk handkerchiefs I had round my head, neck, and waist, gave me, as I thought, length enough, though none to spare. Fastening one end to my saddle, I passed the other end to Esquimeralda, who, however, could not reach it. Vexed at this, I commenced pulling and backing my horse, to see if, by getting nearer the edge of the road, the rope would not be long enough; but no, it was "no go." Suddenly the horse whisked his tail most unpleasantly in my face. Sanctissima! the very thing. Forbearing to chide my steed, I worked his long strong tail hair securely into the girth-buckle, which was one end of my rope. Muttering a "gracias a Dios," I was about gathering up the rope to pass down to the peon, when I heard a cautious hiss proceeding from him. Turning, I looked down, and saw he was all excitement, pointing across the chasm, seemingly some two or three feet below him. Among some stunted bushes was a great yellow-brown beast. Though I had never seen one, I needed not Esquimeralda's whispered "Tigre, tigre!" to know it was the monarch of these hills—that within some forty feet of me stood a magnificent puma.

CHAPTER XXX.

Esquimeralda's Fight with the Puma.

ALTHOUGH the puma was within a few yards of where I stood, he was on the opposite side of the *crevasse* that ran up the face of the hill, on the higher side of which was the ledge where Esquimeralda stood. It was, therefore, only by craning over, holding on to my horse, I was enabled to view the animal, and a fair shot was impossible.

Esquimeralda asked for my revolver, which I carefully let down to him by the rope. It was one of Holland's largest size, six-chambered, breech-loading, carrying conical balls, each weighing very nearly an ounce. Though it is universally believed in South America that a puma will not face a man, my own experience teaches me any animal will fight when brought to bay or wounded. I, therefore, was somewhat anxious, on the account of Esquimeralda, who commenced blazing away with the revolver. The first two shots only provoked some snarls and growlings,

and whether the animal was then wounded or not, we never knew. Again the peon fired, and this time with a different result, for, with a loud roar of agony, the magnificent brute sprang to the very edge of the rock he was on, free from the bushes, or projecting stones, and within shot for me.

Jumping across the road for my rifle, I heard a tremendous shindy, and a defiant shout, a roar, a scrambling, and falling of stones. In a second I was back at the edge of the road, rifle in hand. The puma had leapt the chasm; his fore-paws were on the ledge on which knelt my brave Esquimeralda, who, of course, had dropped the pistol, and taken to his natural weapon, the knife, with which he was making great play. The brute was, however, struggling desperately to lift his hind-feet on the ledge, when, of course, it would have been all over with my poor peon. At this moment I fired, lodging a ball in the animal's head, but without any visible effect further, perhaps, than to stimulate his growlings and strugglings. I was more fortunate, perhaps cooler and more careful, with my second shot, which entered his eye, and, I suppose, pierced his brain; for instantaneously he seemed to collapse, and without another struggle, fell back, and I could see him dashed from point to point, until lost in the abyss below.

Long as I have taken in telling this story, but few seconds had elapsed from our first viewing the puma, and, though I had been in no sort of personal danger, I had been terribly anxious for my faithful companion, whose untiring and cheerful attendance to my wants, keen sympathy in my sport, and loudly manifested admiration at my prowess (though, indeed, I am but a second-rate shot), had greatly attached me to him. Passing down the rope, Esquimeralda fastened one end to his sash, then, when he seized it above with his hands, and placed his feet against the side of the hill, I gently led my horse a few paces, and so drew up my man. He had a narrower escape than I had been aware of, for from the knee to the ankle of his huge thigh boots was a great rent, the work of the puma's claw. He, however, seemed to think "a miss was as good as a mile," and, lighting the inevitable cigarette, commenced a long string of maledictions against his horse. He then informed me he was leaning over to pick me a flower, when his saddle turned round; it was altogether bad luck, as the gouchos will commonly stoop over and pick up anything from the ground without dismounting. I was terribly annoyed at our not having any trophy of our, or rather my companion's, encounter with the local king of beasts, the more especially as it was my first and last interview with him. I was glad,

however, when Esquimeralda produced my revolver from his bosom; I feared he had lost it. It had still three charges in it, and I naturally asked why, in the name of fortune, he did not shoot the puma when he had come to such close quarters. "Quien sabe?" he answered; he "was accustomed to the knife." And so these gouchos are more at home with the knife than anything. I have seen them cut their hair with a knife, dress their horses with one, and not wash, but scrape themselves with it. They build their ranchos, and even cut down small trees, with no other tool.

We were now getting short of daylight, so, taking my companion up behind me, we made the best of our way down the hill. On the road we picked up the various sheep-skins, wooden tree, girths, and lasso, which together formed Esquimeralda's saddle; and at the foot of the range we viewed the horse himself, quietly grazing, having kicked himself free of all encumbrances. I then dismounted, and Esquimeralda riding my animal soon lassoed his own. His bridle was gone, but a thin strip of hide tied round the lower jaw very well supplied its place. Pressing our horses, we galloped over the plain, and joined our camp soon after sun-down. My friends, who had begun to feel a little anxious, keenly sympathized in my disappointment at losing the puma, and two or

three of them tried to console me by promising several skins of that animal at Catamarca; a promise which they most generously kept, giving me my choice out of a large collection. I may here mention that these skins are articles of commerce, being used to cover saddles in the upper Argentine provinces, in Chili, and Bolivia.

Three more days' travel over the most beautiful hills and valleys, sleeping at Poman, Guarconda, and La Conception, brought us safely back to the city of Catamarca.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Panic in Catamarca.—Stoppage of Communications.

We found all our kind friends in the city in a great state of uneasiness and excitement. The post and diligencia from Cordoba (their only means of communication with down country) had not arrived for ten days, being a week overdue. Every one seemed perfectly aware that the stoppage could only be caused by a revolution in Cordoba. Meanwhile, great was the excitement, not to say panic, of the citizens. The most alarming reports were in circulation; nothing was too absurd to find credence. Some had it Unquizas had come down on Buenos Ayres from Entre Rios, overturned the national government, and set himself up as Dictator. Others were certain that the "Montanaros," under Varela and Fellipe Saar, had come down from the Andes in two parties, invading San Juan, Salta, and Tucuman, and defeating the national troops under General Navaez and Tabooador, the Governor of

Tucuman, who had crossed the Catamarcanian frontier with the *débris* of their forces some two or three days before. But the favourite report of all was that the allies, the Argentines and Brazilians, had been well thrashed in Paraguay; that the allied armies were completely demoralized, and in armed bands were wandering about the states of the republic, robbing and murdering all before them. This last report was the most unpleasant to us, as we thought it the most possible, not to say probable. We had seen in the Buenos Ayrean papers before leaving that the allied armies were not in the most flourishing condition; and we were quite aware that, had they met with reverses, thousands of the greatest scoundrels and cut-throats in the world would be loose in the country; for it was well known that the Argentine government had of late been rather pushed to find reinforcements, and that all the criminals—convicted murderers, forgers, thieves—all the sweepings of the Argentine jails, had been punished by being sent to serve as soldiers in Paraguay.

I had made all my arrangements to leave Buenos Ayres for England by the royal mail steamer "Arno" at the end of September, so that this delay was now especially annoying to me. However, there was nothing left but to make the best of it. At present there was no possible way,

of getting on, so I had a good cleaning match at my arms and accoutrements, and packed and arranged my skins, birds, etc., took a little physic, and tried to look pleasant. This was all very well for two or three days, but after that there was still no news, and I began to get impatient, in spite of the universal kindness and hospitality of the people, the tertullias, and the cock-fighting, for which Catamarca is famous, and with which I am bound to admit I was intensely disgusted and disappointed. Don Adolfo shared in my impatience to be moving, and we determined to make a start in some fashion ere many more hours elapsed. We discussed crossing the Andes into Chili, and at Valparaiso or other part embarking in some coasting steamer, and so going round to Buenos Ayres by the Straits of Magellan. On inquiry we found, however, it would be quite impossible to attempt any of the passes of the Andes for at least another two months, and even then the snow would hardly be sufficiently cleared. In spite of our impatience, we did not at all see our way to getting off. We could hear of no diligencias or carriages of any description in the town; moreover, we were informed we should find the post-houses on our road abandoned, and thus be unable to procure any change of horses.

A fortnight had passed since any news from below. The poor little governor was in a most

pitiable state. He was not a popular man with any party; he had been elected, as 'tis said of the Popes, rather to prevent the election of some one else, than for any merit of his own.

From his point of view, the little man's position was sufficiently embarrassing. An invading force might arrive at any moment, and give him the alternative of producing money, rations, and reinforcements, or being shot by "drum-head." Whereas, should he call upon his loving fellow-citizens for any of the above requisitions, there would infallibly be a "pronunciamento," and he would probably be burnt in his own house.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Our Conveniency.—The Little Angel.—Our Equipage.—Glorious Revolution of 1867.

WILL it be believed that, all this time, such was the complete paralyzation of the people of Catamarca, governing and governed, that it had never struck any one to send a small party down country to gain intelligence; nor, in spite of the agitation on the subject by Don Adolfo, Don Samuel, and myself, could any one be induced to go. At length, our patience being exhausted, Don Adolfo, his son, and myself determined to start down country, if we had to ride the same horses, and do it by "marches." The kind and brave old Don Samuel intimated his intention of accompanying us, and his inquiries and exertions at last discovered a most wonderful and antique coach, something like an enormous ghost of one of the London jarveys of fifty years ago. So ancient was this equipage, that the oldest inhabitant could not remember its ever having been used. For my part, I always declared it must have been brought to South

America by Don Juan de Garay, the founder of Buenos Ayres; for the only place I ever saw its fellow, was in that wonderful carriage infirmary, the royal stables, or coach-houses, in Madrid. However, it was very roomy, in shape like a huge elongated chariot, but with the door behind, with a good flat roof for our beds and luggage. Unfortunately, it was terribly dilapidated and rickety, and in spite of our most ingeniously tying the whole affair together with innumerable strong strips of green hide, whenever it moved there was a most ominous heaving and rattling, together with a mournful creaking, not to say shrieking sound, which induced most of the bystanders to declare it would never last to see Cordoba again. However, the great thing was to make a start. If the "conveniency" fell to pieces just outside the city, we were quite determined not to retrace our steps, but to mount some of the peons' horses, and ride through. When we had packed our carriage, collected horses, and induced a lot of gouchos to act as postilions, to my intense disgust it was decided not to start that day, but "mañana" (to-morrow). This word mañana, in South America as in Spain, is the disease, the difficulty of the country. Mañana is the obstacle, the enemy to all progress and civilization—ports, railroads, peace with the Paraguans, war with their present allies the Brazilians—everything is to be mañana,

to-morrow, which, in the mouth of any one with Spanish blood in them, means some future indefinite period. However, in this instance, thanks to the continual worry Don Adolfo and myself kept up, we really did make a start next day. My versatile peon Esquimeralda volunteered to act as capitaz of the postilions, and ride the near-side wheeler—in fact, to steer. An old superannuated diligencia postilion was found to ride the other wheeler, and Dons Samuel and Adolfo's three servants rode three of the leaders, whilst our team of seven was made up by the men from the owners of the horses, who, when relieved at the various post-houses, drove their horses back.

We were four well armed and determined men inside, viz., Don Samuel, Don Adolfo and son, Don Anchelito (little Anchel, or *Angel*), and myself. I have said four men; I suppose the "little Angel," being but fourteen years of age, could hardly be called a man, but he had his revolver and his knife, a *couteau de chasse*, like the rest, and seemed quite delighted at the idea of blood-letting—looking forward to a little homicide as an English lad would to his first day's fox-hunting. Some two or three of the gouchos had old and curious specimens of shooting-irons —all, of course, had their big knives; and, supported by the presence of the four "patrones," I really believe were to be depended upon. Alto-

gether, we were as full of fighting as "a waggon-load of wild cats."

Personally, I considered myself perfectly safe, as we were far too strong for wandering parties of deserters or banditti, and no organized revolutionary force, of whatever party, were likely to interfere in any way with a travelling Englishman. In case of the latter contingency, however, I could not but be rather anxious as to what would be the position of my brave companions. They were men of mark and high political station, with, of course, corresponding friendships and enmities. However, nothing seemed to disturb their grave contentment and imperturbability, as we made a capital start, accompanied by heaps of good wishes and "bon viajes" of our friends. The road, though very deep and sandy, was down hill; so our team of seven went along cheerily, and we congratulated ourselves that our road was sandy rather than stony, as the strips of green hide, which alone fastened the tires to our wheels, were not so likely to cut. That night we slept at the post-house "La Punta del Rio," fifteen leagues from Catamarca, with which progress we were much pleased. We found the post-houses occupied as usual, and of course the horses were very fresh, having had no work for so long a time. The poor postmasters, however, seemed much bewildered and anxious as to when the diligencia

would run again—or, at any rate, when they would be paid. By the next evening we accomplished another fifteen leagues, sleeping at "Don Diego." No one knew anything here more than they did in Catamarca. We started before dawn next morning, and after doing sixteen leagues, about two o'clock P.M. we safely reached the hospitable estancia of the jolly old Don Juan Martiney, the Commandante at Horketta. He had received a despatch a week back that there was a revolution in Cordoba, but knew nothing further, as, except the goucho who bore him that message, not a soul had passed on the road since the postal communication had ceased. Here it was evidently necessary to re-tie our carriage together; and our poor postilions were up nearly all night cutting strips of hide, and repairing damages.

At daylight next morning we started without loss of time, as we now had to recross the "Salinas." Don Juan lent us several peons and a large tropilla of horses and mules; so that, "tailing on" nine or ten horses, we went along at a tearing gallop. At about an hour after midnight we had covered more than thirty leagues, and had crossed the salt-beds, and were on the Cordoba edge of the "Salina," where we had some supper, and spread our beds, as our postilions were very tired, being amateurs, and having been up all the night before.

At daylight we pushed on three or four leagues to the Toscas, where we breakfasted; then continued our journey another sixteen leagues that day, sleeping at the Barrancas—this being the last night we should sleep in the open air. Next morning, about seven leagues took us to the beautiful estancia and post-house of the Algo Robas, which only left us twenty-five leagues more to Cordoba. Here we were cordially received by Señor Bustamenté, who gave us all the news. There had been a revolution at Cordoba, and for a fortnight there had been riot and anarchy in the city, but that now all was quiet again; order and government were restored, thanks to the valour of the national troops. There appeared to have been several three-cornered sort of engagements between the national troops, the local militia, and the patriots; but, though it was agreed on all hands that extraordinary valour had been displayed by all parties, I could not hear that any blood had been shed, except that of many cattle for "asado" (roast beef) for "los valientes;" an old woman who had been accidentally shot, and who no doubt richly deserved shooting, if not for anything she did in this revolution, in the former one; and one gentleman, the leader of a well-known and much-dreaded band of ruffians, who had been taken red-handed, tried by court-martial, and incontinently shot.

This, as far as I could learn, was a correct list of sacrifices to the "cause of freedom;" of martyrs to the glorious revolution of September, 1867. This glorious revolution must not be compared with another glorious revolution of 1867, of a couple of months before, because that was all over by the end of July. Meanwhile there was an immense amount of talk; the Argentine press were full of leaders about "saviours of their country," regeneration, federation, unification, solidification, etc., etc.

The worthy citizens had enjoyed what they called "a demonstration of their sentiments" as to the Paraguay War and feeling towards their allies, the Brazilians, whose flag they trailed through the mud, defiling it in every possible way. Doubtless the Paraguay War is unpopular and ruinous, and the alliance with Brazil is unnatural, and by no means cordial; but none of these things really had anything to do with this "pronunciamento." I was credibly informed that the *fons et origo*, the main-spring of that glorious expression of public feeling, was a sum of thirty thousand dollars, which, by some extraordinary concatenation of circumstances, had accumulated, and was lying in the public treasury at Cordoba. The Governor having left the province for Rosario on business of state, his *locum tenens*, or Minister-in-Chief, got up a revolution, and "puckaroued"

the dollars—giving half to the patriots, his supporters, and concealing the other half for his own particular private enjoyment in future and more quiet times. It was currently reported later that the Señor ——, the gentleman who got up the "pronunciamento," was at first arrested; but was soon released, and his offences condoned, in consideration of the restitution of those very fifteen thousand dollars, his share of the looting of the public treasury. The other moiety, the "patriots" had turned into "aqua diente" long before.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Our Conveniency comes to Grief.

At Algo Robas we met the postman, who thought he was opening the road for Catamarca. He was surprised and pleased to see us, and hear all was quiet above, as, of course, he knew nothing of the state of the upper country. This man informed us that all things were now settled down again in Cordoba, and that, doubtless, the diligencia would be once more started for Catamarca "mañana." The road from Barrancas had been more stony, and our hide-bound wheels had suffered accordingly. We therefore determined to halt for the rest of the day and night at our comfortable quarters, starting very early next morning, so to perform the twenty-five leagues and reach Cordoba early in the evening. Accordingly, having repaired damages, daylight saw us on our road. Our horses were fresh, our road good, and as we rattled along in the crisp morning air, our spirits rose as we thought this would be the last day of this rather wearisome mode of travelling, as we were informed the Cen-

tral Argentine Railway was opened (since we passed) to Villa Nueva, some sixty miles further than Frailè Muerto, and nearer Cordoba, which was now within one day's posting of the terminus.

Matters were not destined to go quite so smoothly with us, however. About three leagues from Algo Robas, we came to a stiffish hill, somewhat winding, to ease off its steepness. One side of the road was studded with huge quartz rocks, cropping from the ground; on the other side was a deep rent, the dry bed of a former torrent, which marched with the road.

Carriages in Catamarca have no drags, the horses no breeching; it is the mode there to go down hill full split, I suppose to get it the sooner over. In this instance we, following the custom of the country, were going best pace. We had just turned an awkward corner, getting off with a tremendous lurch, when a slight distance in advance we saw the huge trunk of a fallen tree lying right across the road. Esquimeralda took in the situation at once; it was impossible to stop, equally so to avoid the obstacle. At the same moment, the leading postilions turned their heads inquiringly to their capitaz, pointing out the fallen tree. Esquimeralda nodded, then spurring and flogging, with a wild cheer our seven reckless horsemen charged the obstacle. A tremendous leap in the air (sending the tops of our heads against the roof

of the carriage in a very unpleasant manner); a heavy lee lurch, and two or three grinding bumps, with a sudden stop, told us we were stranded. Jumping out, we found we were aground indeed; nothing was left of the front wheels but the naves and two or three spokes sticking out. The tires had burst asunder, and broken fellies and spokes were lying all about. We must abandon our old craft at last.

Meanwhile my companions, unmoved as usual, despatched one of the peons with a note to Cordoba, describing our position, and ordering a carriage to be sent out for us without delay. Sternly impressing on the peon the necessity for his going through to Cordoba without stopping, save to change his horse at each post, and warning him on no account to get drunk *before* reaching Cordoba and delivering the missive, we mounted four of the peons' horses, and retraced our steps to Algo Robas. Once more we were most kindly received by Señor Bustamente, who, after the manner of his country, placed himself, his wife and family, his house, animals, and all that was his, at our disposition; and, what was more to the purpose, sent a bullock-cart and man to remove the obstacle, the fallen tree, from the road, and to fetch our men and luggage; and then he informed me in which direction there was capital deer, hare, and partridge-shooting, which I very

much enjoyed that day and the following one. I also found some pieces of silver ore in the sierras, which from all the indications must be highly argentiferous in these localities. On the evening of the second day of our detention, a huge comfortable American omnibus arrived for us, in which we successfully achieved our journey next day, breakfasting at Los Tales, dining at Jesus Maria, and arriving at the comfortable Hotel de Paris, in Cordoba, that evening, having accomplished our seventy-five miles in fifteen hours, including stoppages, which may be considered first-rate posting in that country.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A Little Misunderstanding.—The French Barber.

ALTHOUGH the revolution in Cordoba was quite suppressed, there was still a considerable amount of excitement among the youth of the city. Pleasant, cheery young fellows enough they are, though somewhat given to braggadocio and nonsensical jabber about politics. Two so-called political clubs had been started in Cordoba since the late revolution, apparently with the object of speedily promoting another, judging from the socialistic style of screeching and ranting the members indulged in. Their fundamental rule was, that no man over twenty-five was eligible for membership.

Innocently enough, I was very nearly coming into unpleasant collision with one of these fiery young patriots. I had sauntered into a café, and, calling for my chocolate and glass of cold water, entered into conversation with the only other customer in the room—a smart-looking young Cordovienne, with a wonderful head of long, fair

curling hair. Having discussed the last revolution and the merits of a line regiment we could see drilling in the Plaza, I suddenly remembered I had intended to have my hair and beard trimmed. Turning carelessly to the little man, I said, "Have you any barbers in Cordoba?" Looking oddly for a moment, he answered, pleasantly enough, "Yes, sir; I am one, at your disposition." "Caramba!" said I, touching my hair and beard, "how fortunate! I'll give you a job. Vamos" (let us go). Even as I spoke, up jumped the little wretch, and shouting the usual South American imprecation, "C——o," he flopped himself down offensively near me on the same bench I was sitting on. Then rudely staring in my face, he put his hand behind him, and pulled out one of those long, crooked, Spanish knives which, when he opened, was nearly as long as himself. Now I never go about entirely unarmed in South America, so putting my hand to my breast-pocket, I displayed a small old-fashioned six-barrelled Yankee revolver, with a spring bayonet.* Touching the spring, with a click out came

* The most useless thing in all creation. I remember, when with Colonel Patten, of the 107th, at Futtehpore Secree, in India, in 1857, I put five of these pellets into a Mussulman sowar, in the region of the heart and stomach, and *then* the beggar came at me with his tulwar, and had his horse not made a stumble, and so given me a chance, I am not at all sure the sowar would not have proved the better swordsman.

the bayonet, with which I commenced to pick my teeth. Then, calling the "mozo" (waiter), I demanded my reckoning, and feigning to have a difficulty in extracting my purse from my trousers pocket, I inserted the point of my elbow with a jerk into my funny little neighbour's stomach. I suppose I caught him in the "wind," as school-boys say, for his tongue rolled out, and his eyes rolled for a minute in a most comical fashion. Profusely apologizing, I rose, and swaggered out of the café, still sucking my extemporized tooth-pick, and really overjoyed that the "row" had not ended more tragically.

A few doors on I did find a barber—a jolly little Frenchman, an ex-Zouave, with an English Crimean medal. During his operations I detailed to him my adventure, which highly delighted him. Afterwards purchasing some soap and other little toilet necessaries from my French friend, he insisted upon "treating" me, at the same time seeing who was the "pekin" who had so insulted his craft, and a stranger, in the café kept by his dear friend and compatriot. I was charmed and amused with the promptness with which the gallant Frenchman adopted my quarrel, but felt bound to remonstrate when I saw him buckling on a most formidable-looking *couteau de chasse*, through the rear of the waistband of his trousers. He assured me, however, that he meant no mis-

chief, and that it was his invariable custom to be so prepared "whene'er he took his walks abroad!"

On arrival at the café, we found my friend had left; but the waiter informed us he was a well-known "commercianté" (a store-keeper or linen-draper) of the city. So I never learnt our cause of quarrel. I can only suppose that with all his Republican or Radical notions, his *fraternité* and *egalité*, he drew the line somewhere, and was angry at my believing even *his* assurance that he was a practising barber.

This was the only occasion I ever had to show a weapon in the Argentine Republic. Still, I should always recommend my countrymen to go armed, as the mere display of weapons oftentimes stops a "rowdy," or "bully," going too far.

As the horses on the regular post road to Villa Nueva had been terribly overworked conveying the military to and fro, we that night sent a courier by the old Jesuit's road by the Estancia d'Oliva, to collect relays of horses for us at various points; and starting early next morning, we did the thirty-five leagues without stopping.

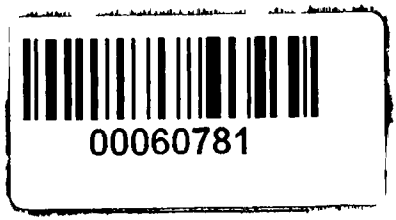
We reached the terminus at Villa Nueva that night, but as there was no hotel accommodation, but the peripatetic houses of our old Italian host from Frailé Muerto, all of whose "bunks"

were occupied, we turned into a luggage-van, which we found bitter cold accommodation, even though we had been quite contented sleeping in the "open" in Catamarca, a few degrees to the northward. Next morning, at six, the train started for Rosario. We had in the train a large detachment of the brave troops who were returning after suppressing the Cordoba revolution. They were under the command of a very rising officer, Colonel Nelson, of the Argentine Artillery, who, though a citizen, and born in Buenos Ayres, is descended from an English father, talks English, and looks and feels very much as an Englishman, as, indeed, do several other of the most prominent men in the republic, notably the most prominent of the present ministry next the president, though, by the way, his blood is Yankee.

On arrival at Rosario, at three P.M., we were received by the whole population, headed by their national guard and band, and though it was broad daylight, the discharge of a quantity of fireworks and rockets was considered a very delicate attention. This popping of squibs, crackers, and rockets, without any visible results, had rather a ridiculous effect. However, that and the greetings and cheering made plenty of noise, and the Argentines love a row. Anyhow, the tired soldiers and the populace seemed mutually delighted.

Passing one more night at that most wretched

of publics, the Hotel of the Peace, at Rosario, the next day we were once more on board the "Lujan," which took us down the noble Rio Parana to the Tigre Creek in some fifteen hours; from there the railway to Buenos Ayres, where, having spent another week among its hospitable citizens, I embarked on board the Royal Mail steamer "Arno," in which, after riding out a most tremendous pampero off Monte Video, we most comfortably and safely arrived at Rio Janeiro, where passengers are detained five days for some inscrutable reason, known only to the Directors of the Royal Mail Steam Company. Then, transferring ourselves and effects to that noble old steamer, the "Oneida," her jolly old skipper took good care we had a pleasant passage, touching at Bahia, Pernambuco, and St. Vincent. I landed at Lisbon thirty-two days after leaving Buenos Ayres; then sauntering leisurely through Portugal, Spain, and the south of France, I landed in England at the end of November, having had just six months of the most novel, amusing, and economical travel it was ever my lot to enjoy.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